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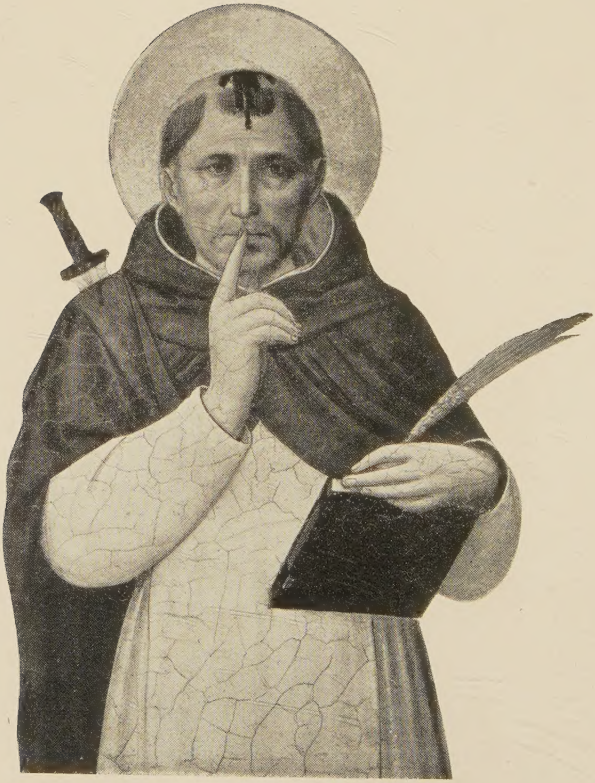

IL SILENZIO

S. Peter Martyr. *By Fra Angelico.*

THE EMPIRE OF SILENCE

BY THE

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CHAPLAIN OF HOLY TRINITY, ROME.

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Dedication.

To My Dear Wife,

a True Comrade,

and the Best of Helpers.

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PREFACE.

EVERY book should be able to justify its existence, or—be suppressed.

How far can this book be justified? And on what grounds can it claim a hearing in these uneasy times? Let us see.

As far as the author knows, a book on Silence fills an unoccupied niche in literature. If there be a similar one on the subject he does not know of it. Many men have pronounced on the excellences of Silence, but he knows of no one who has been at the pains to do so at length, and with reasoned deliberation. The fact then that his book fills a gap, or aims at doing so, would seem to give it a right to exist. One child is not too many for one family, and one book is not too many on Silence.

Then a book on Silence appeals to a general interest. There are a thousand subjects which the world at large cares nothing for, however interesting they may be to the few, but this one stands apart. All are in love with Silence in the abstract. It puts life into a title. It sounds excellently well in a song. A quotation gathers animation from its presence. If ears

then are so alert to the very name, may we not conclude that its treatment is more likely still to meet the general taste ?

There is a third justification to be gathered from the fact that the world may conceivably be bettered by the perusal of a book on Silence. Who could frown on the intention to help it to be better, however faulty the performance of it ? To make a noisy world more silent is an ambition surely to be commended.

To some, no doubt, the attempt will seem to be a kind of forlorn hope, and they will think that, like Mrs. Partington, we are trying with a meagre broom to sweep back an ocean. Yet, where hope is high, even this may be attempted. He who waits for popular consent may wait for ever. To do nothing until the last pessimist smiles approval is to go on doing nothing to the end. Only fools expect perfect success, and if the great ocean of noisy speech still goes rolling on, it may be that rivulets will decrease their volume, or the drops be lessened.

There is sure to be found in this volume much that is familiar to many readers, for I have drawn largely on the world of literature for my illustrations. But if they really illustrate, and are genuine and not mere painted window-lights, they are not misplaced, for they will illuminate the subject.

That the book might have been made more complete no one is more conscious than the author. He would fain have left the subject to mature for a few more years. But life is short, and frequently what is unduly deferred

sees not the light at all. And so he sends it forth just as it is, with all becoming apologies for its defects.

He would have liked also to trace every quotation to its source, giving chapter and verse, but in the gleanings of many years some origins have slipped irretrievably away. It is a defect, but, he hopes, a pardonable one.

A subject spread over so wide an area, and branching out in so many directions, will not appeal equally to everybody. But it is with such a book as it is with those who have been made free of a garden, preferences will come into play and tastes are bound to count. Flowers are not equally choice to bee or butterfly; they simply take their choice.

It may be that an apology is expected for the breach of Silence caused by such a book as this. There are, however, things which must be broken to be preserved, and Silence is one of them. Bones, badly set, have on occasions to be fractured again to restore their straightness. Omelettes cannot be made with unbroken eggs. It is for this sufficient reason that I break Silence, that it may be re-made again.

And if, to some, the book may appear one-sided, the author accepts the accusation, but makes haste to explain that even this has its advantages, for who does not know that to bend a crooked stick straight the curve must be exaggerated on the opposite side? All the same, he has tried to hold the scales evenly, and has never wilfully tilted them to secure a faulty purpose.

It would be a graceful act to thank the many from whose writings the author has so freely gleaned. But many are beyond the shadows, and many are unknown. And perhaps it will be thanks enough that they have been of service in commending so good a theme.

But there is one—his wife—whose literary skill and constant help he can thankfully acknowledge. Clearing manuscripts and correcting proofs is an exacting work, and in some ways the most exacting of all, and the reader owes more than a little to one who, behind the scenes, has thus helped to bear the burden and heat of the day.

CHARLES COURTENAY.

June, 1916.

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CHAPTER I.

IN PRAISE OF SILENCE.

IT seems almost a desecration to write down the praises of silence, inasmuch as one must needs break it in order to celebrate it. Would it not be better, we are tempted to think, to lapse into deeper silence to set forth its excellences ?

Moreover, it seems a work of redundancy to fly the gold and white banner of praise where all are friends, and foes have ceased to be. Why another voice in the almost universal chorus of acclamation ?

There is much truth in all this, but there are considerations which negative the suggestion to withhold further praise.

For a good deal of the uttered eulogies of men may conceivably be only echoes, and therefore meaningless. Even the sincere may hardly be cognisant of the reasons for their shouting. Besides, it may reasonably be doubted whether

the crowd acclaiming silence, without in any degree practising it, are as enthusiastic as they appear. And, certainly, even when praise is reasoned and sincere, there is still room for a deeper conviction of the beauties of silence.

Perhaps no phrase reflects so thoroughly the universal verdict of the world on the glories of silence as the proverb, "Speech is silvern; silence is golden." There is scarcely a language where this proverb is not current. It is one of the truisms of men.

Why this is so, why the trumpets ring out so loud and clear to proclaim silence, why hats are raised and heads inclined in her honour, it is our business now to examine, and, if possible, discover. We shall probably find the list of her excellences a long one, and the witnesses many, but, in the presence of so august a queen, who can grow weary?

A possible way of pursuing our investigation is to follow the method of the proverb, and strike a contrast. This is Carlyle's favourite plan:—

"Under all speech that is good for anything, there lies a silence that is better. Silence is deep as eternity. Speech is shallow as time."

And, again, writing of Abbot Sampson:—

"Eloquence in three languages is good, but it is not the best. To us the Lord Abbot's eloquence is less admirable than his ineloquence, his great invaluable talent for silence."

"As for me," he writes again, "I honour in these loud babbling days all the silent rather. A grand silence that of the Romans; nay, the

grandest of all, that of the Gods. Even triviality and imbecility that can sit in silence, how respectable it is in comparison. The talent of silence is our fundamental one."

Perhaps, however, in this method of contrast, there is a danger of unfairness, in pressing the claims of our favourite to the detriment of its rival. We must not let the one unduly press out the other. We must cultivate the steady hand in holding the balances. So, to avoid the danger of unfairness, we will rather press the positive merits of silence, and give, in detail, her excellences, raising silence without unduly depressing speech.

Such praise is the only kind worth giving.

Let us praise silence then, first of all, *for its wisdom.*

This was Plutarch's praise in his Essay on Education :—

"Silence at the proper season is wisdom, and better than any speech. No one ever yet repented of his silence, while multitudes have repented of their speaking. What has not been said is easy to say, while what has been once said can never be recalled. I have heard of myriads who have fallen into the greatest misfortunes through inability to govern their tongues."

The Arabians used to say that "wisdom is made up of ten parts, nine of which are silence, and the tenth brevity of language."

There are times in life when at the cross-roads we know not which path to take; to speak, or not to speak. Both seem equally

right, or equally wrong. Some step we must take. What is to be done? Surely, the wise course is to hold the tongue. This was Carlyle's conclusion :—

"One law only is clear to me: Hold thy peace. With shut lips, walk the best thou canst with thy lamed feet. And not a word more, here or elsewhere."

The prayer in the Upton Letters is well worthy of utterance :—

"God give me, and all uneasy natures, grace to know when to hold our tongues."

Praise is due to silence *for its modesty.*

There is certain to be a large dash of this in your silent man. Humble and sensitive, the modest man, shrinking from too great publicity, takes refuge in silence. He is the last man to think that either he, or his words, are of any importance. He would rather hold the stirrup for another than get into the saddle himself. Perhaps there are times when his modesty is misplaced, but better this than a too garrulous intrusion of himself.

"Have more than thou showest,
Speak less than thou knowest."

It was remarked of F. W. Robertson that at clerical meetings he ever kept in the background, and rarely spoke unless appealed to, although none could speak to such excellent purpose as he. His was the silence of modesty.

When Kant's Kritik was received by the learned world in silence, he comforted himself with the thought that probably the great public was silent from modesty. And so he wrote :—

"I am obliged to the learned public even for the silence with which it has received my Kritik throughout a considerable time. For this silence at any rate evinces a suspension of judgment, an anxiety not to break off and destroy the yet tender shoot of a premature judgment."

We praise silence *for its gratefulness.*

We greet it as travellers do the bit of green in the waste sandy desert, a glorious oasis to camp in for long.

To emerge from the clatter of the whirling wheels of some mighty machinery into the silent street is rest indeed, and we welcome the comparative silence as infinitely soothing.

Is it not for this that many of us seek the mountains and the country, when we are weary of the noises of life, and want to be rested in ear and mind ?

And so, from the tearing clatter of speech, where so much is said and so little is meant, where so many words go to so little a measure of sense, it is a treat indeed to get away into silence. Neither is silence merely soothing to the ear ; it is quieting to the mind so battered by the multiplicity of speech. In silence we can at least think for ourselves, and go our own way.

We can well sympathise with an art critic, who said that he always preferred to walk alone through picture galleries, because he found by bitter experience that conversation at such times belittles every subject, enfeebles the judgment, and fritters admiration away.

A. C. Benson's schoolmaster admirably expressed the gratefulness and necessity of silence, when he wrote :—

" I shudder to think how sick I am of it all. I want a long bath of silence, and recollection, and repose."

Perhaps it will be a long time before the world will learn that, admirable though speech on occasions may be, if they will but cultivate the charms of silence too, they will be conferring a large benefit on mankind.

We praise silence also *for its expressiveness.* For silence has an eloquence all its own, with which nothing can compete. Silence often says more, and says it better, than the best of speech.

Have not our best orators discovered this when, in the midst of flowing periods, they cultivate the long pause, and say nothing ? Silence goes to the making of the orator as much almost as speech. For then the rugged torrent which rushes along so noisily and so tumultuously is replaced by the quiet smoothness of the unruffled pool. Silence is a splendid background for speech. It is the gold lace among the silver in the tapestry.

" A bird's song is made up of a warble and a silence," one has well said, " and the silence is part of the song."

It was doubtless this which Mozart meant when he was asked what he considered the greatest effect in music, and he replied " No music."

Beethoven was a past master in the art of

long pauses, for the bars of rest are no insignificant part of the score, and to ignore them is indeed to spoil the music.

Addison, referring to this silent pause in some piece of music played in his hearing, said :—

"Methought the short interval of silence had more music in it than any one short space of time before or after it."

Oliver Wendell Holmes writes in his Autocrat of the Breakfast Table :—

"Talking is like playing on the harp. There is as much in laying the hand upon the strings to stop their vibrations as in twanging them to bring out their music."

In questions too of deeper import silence is most impressive, setting great truths forth in better majesty. So judicious Hooker tells us :—

"Dangerous it were for the feeble brain of man to wade far into the doings of the Most High ; Whom although to know be life, and joy to make mention of His Name, yet our soundest knowledge is to know that we know Him not as He is indeed, and our safest eloquence concerning Him is our silence, when we confess without confession that His glory is inexplicable, His greatness above our capacity and reach. He is above and we upon earth ; therefore it behoveth our words to be wary and few."

How much all this is realized is shown when, in celebrating the memory of our gallant dead, no word is spoken, but, with silent lips and solemn faces, the glass is lifted, and the toast is drunk in the most profound silence.

Some will remember that touching letter of

Porphyry to his wife Marcella, reaching, surely, the high-water mark of heathen morality, in which he puts so well the expressiveness of silence :—

" Before God the tongue counts for nought ; the deed is all ; the worst man, even though silent, offers praise to God through his silence."

Caroline Fox, in her Diary, pressed this aspect of silence with her usual vivacity, when she wrote :—

" How I like things done quietly, and without fuss. It is the fuss and bustle principle, which must proclaim itself until it is hoarse, that wars against truth. Let truth be done in silence," she suggests, " until it is forced to speak. And then it should only whisper. All those whom it may concern to hear will hear."

I like to think of St. Francis of Assisi, when too ill to preach in words, appearing before his audiences, and gazing with earnest love upon the crowds who came to receive his benedictions, and to touch his garments. His silent looks said all that was necessary, and said it well. There are indeed " Thoughts which lie too deep for words."

Maeterlinck said a true thing, when he wrote in his Treasure of the Humble :—

" How strongly do we diminish a thing, as soon as we try to express it in words."

" Silence were the best celebration of what I mean to commend," wrote Bacon in the same strain in his Praise of Knowledge.

We praise silence *for its rarity.*

And rarity is worthy of praise sometimes.

There are rare flowers which are beautiful and fragrant as well as rare. Their rarity is an additional charm. There are rare books which not only collectors seize with avidity, and spend their thousands on, but which, being the bloom of ancient days, pass from hand to hand for their inner charms, and soon become the world's classics.

There are natural gifts which are as rare as they are splendid, and which men go far out of their way to seek acquaintance with. Genius is rare and beautiful, wherever we find it. Even physical strength, when immense, appeals to us for its very rarity. And when rare gifts are used to the best purpose we praise them more.

Even so it is with silence, that rare gift which so few manage to perfection, and which the mass of men fail to achieve at all. So much goes to its working, and so beautiful are its results, that we cannot help classing it with the rare and best things of life. And so we praise it as a gift worthy of attainment, and as one of the world's choice things.

No doubt some would refuse it any value, rare or common, but all men have not the eye, nor the ear, nor the heart, to see things of beauty, and only wonder at those who do.

We praise silence *for its courtesy.*

We are all acquainted with the rude talker, who will be heard at all costs, who shouts down his interlocutor, breaks in when another is speaking, and, in fact, plays the part of a boor to perfection. We do not love the breed. We prefer not to know him.

Our admiration goes out rather to him who can listen, and listen, if necessary, deferentially. For courtesy goes ever with refinement, and holds itself in, however pressed, because it is the better and the more gentle way.

And, after all, who are we, that we should take the preference, and tread the boards alone ? If we deem ourselves wiser than most, may not this very opinion be a part of our coarse outfit ? Fair play is a jewel, and especially fair play in speech. If we wish others to listen to us, may they not demand that we give them quite as lengthy a hearing ?

And so we praise the silent man, because he is probably the very pink and model of courtesy, having the gentleman's equipment of modesty, fair-mindedness, humility, and self-respect.

He prefers not to speak, but to allow a better man to do so, He is silent because he counts not his words to be weighty enough, having a low estimate of himself. He knows that his neighbour likes to be heard ; and so he hears him. And if the results are not excellent, he is still silent, because he wishes not to hurt his neighbour's feelings by probably useless retorts. And in all these, and other ways, he plays the courteous gentleman. It is so much easier, too, to play the gentleman by silence than by speech. Speech speedily, and almost certainly, compromises one, but silence is eminently non-committal.

And is it not a beauteous courtesy, which is ever willing to clear a space for others to speak, and to give up his own chances in

favour of another? All the time, he will no doubt be misunderstood, as if he really had nothing good to say, and will almost be taunted for playing the dumb dog. Never mind; if he has lost a reputation, he has gained a character.

We praise silence *for its safety.*

Not, however, when silence is a coward's castle, and men take refuge in it from sheer fear. This is one of the degradations of silence. Security may never take precedence of truth.

The safety I press here is lawful safety; safety which we can all commend.

"Silence can never be called to account," Plato reminds us, and it certainly saves us from the dangers of incriminating speech.

Metellus was once asked, so Plutarch tells us, some question about the intended march of his army, and replied:—

"If I thought that my shirt were privy to this secret, I would pull it off, and throw it into the fire."

All friends are, unfortunately, not friendly, and we do well to remember this possibility when we are tempted to let confessions flow too freely, lest we be taken in our words, and made to suffer for them.

Sa'adi was a wise man, and made it his business to keep watch over his tongue, lest malicious ears should listen, and malicious tongues tell, and so he writes:—

"I have myself determined to observe silence, because that in conversation there frequently happens both good and evil, and the eye of an enemy observes only that which is bad."

In times of unrest and persecution the advantages of silence are evident, and many a man has saved his skin by keeping his tongue well bitted. Ears at such times are preternaturally acute, and a whisper is heard further than could be imagined possible. But silence no man can overhear.

"I do not remember that I ever regretted what I did not say," was the experience, oft repeated, of Bishop Griswold.

We praise silence *for its example.*

It is highly improbable that silence will ever become fashionable, in spite of its excellences. It is hardly showy enough. Besides, its appeals are rather to those with delicate perceptions and tastes. Just as there are ears which cannot catch the sweet, high notes of birds, and nostrils to which many fragrant perfumes have no reality, so there are souls to whom silence can never be anything else than an affliction. These are they of whom Pulsford writes :—

"Undivine souls feel that more or less noise is necessary to their comfort. In silence an uneasy feeling creeps over most people, as though they were breathing a strange element. Absolute silence few can endure."

Now, the only chance of giving the practice of silence a good footing in life, is not so much by abstract appeals as by worthy examples. All fashions originate with the few who set them. Why not then set the fashion of silence ? At any rate, why not try to set it ?

Example shows that silence is within the realms of possibility, which many doubt. And

silence may be trusted to commend itself to all who can understand a beautiful and useful thing.

"It seems you stop when I stop," said a much tormented preacher to his coughing congregation, after a prolonged and effective pause. They followed the example.

We praise silence *for its economy.*

Over-speech is pure waste. It is silence which checks such prodigality.

It may be an economy of money, like that instance of the garrulous applicant for the tuition of the old rhetorician, who talked so incessantly, that the professor immediately demanded double fees. And in reply to the query why he should be charged twice as much as others, he was plainly told :—

"Because I must teach you two sciences ; the one how to hold your tongue, and the other how to speak."

More silence would have saved many who have been compelled to pay heavy damages for defamation of character, for sundry libels, and for the luxury of passing a too personal opinion.

Silence economizes friendships too.

The tongue is the great divider between men and women, and you may be almost sure that, where a breach has come, the cause of it is to be sought in the over-ready tongue. One or the other has said things that should have been left unsaid.

Take such a man as was described by one :—

"A secret runs through him like water through a sieve. He is not happy until he has

got it, and miserable till he has got rid of it. He is a sort of cholera in the place, and when he breaks out he carries off friendships by the dozen."

Then again silence is an economy of time.

If a man takes five minutes to say what might easily have been said in one, he has lost four valuable minutes, has he not ? If he speaks unnecessarily at length, which he is pretty sure to do when he need not have spoken at all, then time is idly and unprofitably consumed.

And the trouble is that he deprives me of my time in listening to him, as well as his own ; so that the evil multiplies itself with the number of his listeners.

Of course, silence is an economy of energy.

It is true that many talkers consume but little energy of brain, simply running on as the brook runs, effortless and easily.

But if they do not weary themselves, is it equally true that they do not weary others, and destroy their inner energies ? Nothing is more exhausting than trying to keep up with a ceaseless talker, and straining yourself to make sense of what cannot yield it. An eager talker of the garrulous type will rain words upon you like the shot and shell of battle, and will bruise and hurt you even more. What a blessing economical silence would be !

" Spare yourself a little," we say to over-energetic people, and great would be the refreshment to the talker if he were only to do so. Muscle, brain, and nerve, would all be the better for a little judicious silence.

"True silence is the rest of the mind, and is to the spirit what sleep is to the body, nourishment and refreshment."

Lord Bacon said a similar thing when he wrote :—

"Silence is like sleep ; it refreshes wisdom."

Rest cures are admirable methods for the jaded and nervous, especially the rest which comes from a prolonged silence.

We praise silence *for its fruitfulness.*

Once let silence reign, and what blessings would immediately come to birth, fertilised by its gracious influences ! Think of the thousand and one things which would die from sheer inanition if once the stream of words ceased to flow. It is not easy to lie without the aid of words. Scandal would immediately cease. Idle controversies would flicker out. Temper would be deprived of one of its chief means of explosion. No more nagging ; no more provocations ; no more open quarrels. Such silence would create a new world, with new people in it, and new glories.

This is what makes the paradise of the deaf, and one which must be set off as a distinct compensation. They carry their silence about with them.

"One doesn't lose much by being deaf," said the famous Lord Chesterfield. He had tried for long to catch the sentiment of a speaker, and when at last he caught it, he burst out in his disappointment in the above words.

We praise silence *for its popularity.*

The world acclaims the silent, however little

they may emulate him. He is better company far than the garrulous, because he knows how to listen well. But then he must not be silent in the wrong places. He must do his little share, and say enough, no matter how monosyllabic, to keep the ball in motion.

At any rate, it can never be said of the silent what Plutarch wrote of the talkative of his day :—

"It is the cruel fate of talkative people to desire hearers, and not to get them, for everyone flies from them with headlong speed. If people are sitting or walking about in any public place, and see one coming they quickly pass the word to one another to shift quarters."

Macaulay was a wise and well-informed talker, but even he would have talked better had he talked less. Sydney Smith's praise of him is well known :—

"Macaulay is improved. I have observed in him of late flashes of silence."

Quite in accordance with the popularity of silence was that comment of Coleridge :—

"It is characteristic of Roman dignity and sobriety that in Latin 'to favour with the tongue' means to be silent. We say 'Hold your tongue.' It is not Frenchmen or women only who would rather have their tongues bitten than bitted, and feel their souls in a strait waistcoat, when they are obliged to remain silent."

We praise silence *for its serenity.*

Not the raging torrents, but the calm pools of life, are the best exponents of silence. The

lake, mirroring the surrounding beauties of nature and the glorious sun above it, tells the story best of the achievements of silence amongst men. All is quiet and serenity where silence reigns.

The placid Quakeress, who distils serenity as she walks, and looks as if nothing had ever, or could ever, ruffle her calm, is a walking example of the serenity of silence.

To the poet Rogers Heaven was just this serenity, undisturbed by speech.

"Words are so twisted and tortured by some in the present day," he writes, "that I am really sorry for them—I mean for the words. It is a favourite fancy of mine, that, perhaps, in the next world, the use of words may be dispensed with, that our thoughts may stream into each other's minds without any verbal circulation."

Amiel lifted the matter to its highest pinnacle when he wrote :—"The calm sea says more to the thoughtful soul than the same sea in storm and tumult. The divine state *par excellence* is that of silence and repose, because all speech and all action are in themselves limited and fugitive."

We praise silence *for its protection.*

The world is one big danger spot, and is a veritable centre of infection to those who live in it. And we need to keep our mouths shut as a sort of spiritual respirator, to exclude all germs, and to keep our own evil bacilli from infecting others.

How hard it is to pass in and out amongst

our fellows, and preserve our spiritual health! Probably, this was the meaning of Seneca's remark:—

"As often as I have been amongst men, I have returned less a man."

Now, silence saves us from much of the world's mischiefs, and enables us, like a man in armour, to escape the bullets of our foes. Once, however, break silence wrongfully, and we lay ourselves open to the evil, and render ourselves vulnerable.

Even a hedgehog is safe so long as he keeps his head tucked well in. And the snail is safer under his protective armour than when he is half outside.

And, as Plutarch remarks, we are well provided for this silent seclusion:—

"There is no member of human bodies so strongly enclosed within a double fortification as the tongue, entrenched within with a barricade of sharp teeth, to the end that if it refuses to obey and keep silent when reason presses the glittering reins, we should fix our teeth in it till the blood comes, rather than suffer the inordinate and unreasonable din." For, according to the saying of Euripides:—

> "Our miseries do not spring
> From houses wanting locks and bolts,
> But from unbridled tongues."

CHAPTER II.

THE POWER OF SILENCE.

WE all have a great respect for strength. Whether it be physical, mental, or moral strength, we delight in its presentation. And one of our dearest ambitions is to be ourselves strong. No doubt, we have our personal preferences as to the type of strength we wish. But, this allowed, we may be said to take pleasure in all feats which reveal the strong man.

It is probable, however, that the might of silence has not occurred to some of us, and it will come, therefore, as a new claimant for our suffrages. And if some will not straightway bow to its claims, they will, nevertheless, be willing to hear of its exploits in the fields of life. Fair play demands at least a hearing.

Professor Jowett once said, "I am a great believer in the power of reticence," and it will be our effort in this chapter to show something of its power.

The question we have to face is, What will silence do better than speech? Is it any better? If so, where?

Is there no distinct power in *silent example?*

We know there is. It has prevailed when speech has been poured out in profusion and in vain. The silent man has come and lived, and the influence has been immense and overpowering.

"Example is better than precept," we say and believe, just because it is silent.

Into a noisome alley of a great city came a widow, who, but for her poverty, would have gone to sweeter regions. Into the abode of dirt and sin she brought her cleanliness and hatred of evil, and one little house began to set a silent pattern for the rest. The spotless threshold, the clean window curtains, and her own spotless self, perceived, at first, with a gasp of surprise, and then with a distant admiration, acted like leaven in the alley, and began to do their work. All around her at first, and then further down the street, the silent reformation began, changing the face of the place. Had she spoken, the charm would have been broken, and she would have been hounded from the place as a meddling interloper, but saying nothing, and doing so much quiet work, wrought the change both quickly and well.

And so it is in life, the bright face has done abundantly more than the scolding tongue, and where the silent example has appeared, the lesson has gone straight to the heart.

People somehow fancy that words are cheap and easy, and that in all talkers the Pharisaic spirit is present and too prominent, and so they distrust them ; but the object lesson of a really quiet influence doing really good work is

overwhelming, and men and women prostrate themselves before it.

And what a *power of inspiration* there is in silence!

Orators can sway us, and make our hearts beat more quickly, but there the influence ends. We wonder half an hour later what it was which so moved us, but the silent man awakens deeper thought, and more inner questionings far. He suggests so much more to us. In fact, he inspires us.

It is the silent pool of quite unknown depth which sets us wondering far more than the noisy rattle of the shallow waters rippling over the stones, and sparkling in the sunlight.

It was said of a famous Bishop:—

"His talk was rich and full; his silences full of inspiration."

And, in truth, more than half the inspiring influence of strong men is produced by what they do not say, but only radiate. They create an atmosphere, which acts upon us like a sea breeze.

It was the consciousness of this which gives the point to the story of Macklin, the actor, who once knocked down a prompter for a wanton interference. It seems that Macklin had three pauses in his declamations, a short pause, a long pause, and a grand pause. It was this last which the prompter interrupted.

"The fellow interrupted me in my grand pause," he explained to the audience when he returned to the stage.

Neither is it difficult to understand why

silence is so inspiring. The orator going full steam ahead may take away our breath with his impetuosity, but we are so lost in his fine periods and resounding voice that we are left no time to think. In the silent pauses we are permitted to revolve within, and be stirred and moved by, some of his good thoughts. For all hearing is a mutual operation. The speaker supplies me with reflections, and I give my ears and my mind. The silences give the mind its place to work.

See also the *power of silence in generating awe.*

It would seem to some that, if the tongue be still, nothing speaks; forgetting that the eye can be more eloquent than the tongue. And when the tongue is quiet, it gives the eye a chance.

Travellers' tales are not always true, but the many stories which come to us of the taming power of the eye when some raging beast is on the spring are absolutely true. The shout of terror, or the cry for help, would not have done the work that the searching, penetrating look has done, filling the beasts with bewilderment, and sending them away.

Riotous mobs have quailed before a quiet, steadfast gaze, and have fallen back to let the victim through. The look of fearless courage, unabashed at the danger, and daring the mad crowd to do their worst, has shamed them into submission and fear. There was a silent power in it all which achieved the triumph.

Was it not this which, on the hill side of Nazareth, gave the Great Master a passage way

through the menacing villagers, thirsting for His destruction ?

The power of silence is seen too in the *forging of fruitful thoughts.* For every great master worker has been a brooding thinker, and the deed has ever sprung from the thought. A good deal of silent preparation goes to the world's great works :—

"All great deeds are born of silence. Nowhere do we find any mighty work, any noble endeavour, which was not matured in long and patient silence ere it spake out in its accomplishment."

Great campaigns which, from start to finish, swept all before them, had been fought out in the silent brain long before. But for the previous silence defeat would have taken the place of victory.

A Moltke takes out of his pigeon-holes the plans of battle, and the unthinking French are rolled up in disaster and defeat. It was the preparatory silence which made all the difference.

Great discoveries are not the accidental outflashings of unthinking brains, but the results of eager and unremitting thought. The train was laid in the long broodings of the past, and the discovery just happened as another step evolved from it.

Newton wrought out his marvellous laws as he sat for many a weary hour, engrossed and silent. Sleep, meals, and social responsibilities, were all forgotten amidst the silence. There was more than an apple concerned in the business.

It was said of Sir Humphrey Davy that he was making science in his laboratory before he talked about it.

One great engineer solved his problems in bed, as the place where he was least likely to be disturbed, and where he could lie silent and think.

Who ever heard of chatterers doing great works, or making great discoveries ? They are too busy with their tongues to do much in the world of action. They are not silent enough.

In the sphere of rebuke silence is effectual far more than speech, for all its energy goes into the rebuke without waste.

Receive an ill-natured communication with stony silence, and a steady look straight into the eyes of the unwelcome talker, and who does not know its power ? It says more plainly than words could do :—

"I do not approve. I prefer not to listen to your uncharitable talk. Please take your wares elsewhere. I do not want them."

It perhaps requires more than a little strength of mind to take this silent course, but it is an investment which pays a handsome dividend.

For this silent rebuke not only lets the seeds fall, but it leaves them to germinate in the heart of the rebuked. It sets his mind at work to interpret the silence, and what it means is not open to doubt.

Sir Robert Peel once dealt so with a number of glib people, who were tossing to and fro the sacred theme of our Lord's divinity over the

dinner table. For some time he sat still and silent, looking the indignation he felt, but this not answering fully its intention, he ordered his carriage, and apologized for his abrupt departure in the words that he was "still a Christian."

This was the method also of Archbishop Temple's mother, who, when her boy was betrayed into a fault, "said nothing. She only looked at me with a look of pained surprise, and I have never forgotten that look."

And certainly there is a sting in silent rebuke which leaves a long smart in the mind and heart by its novelty, and adds to the silent man's intention all those other thoughts which an aroused conscience generates. So that, even if it is not immediately effective, it may be trusted to go on stinging in the days to come.

Naturally, silence can work both ways, and silence may be met with an equal silence; but then it may mean remorse and sorrow. We trust it was so with King William III, of whom Bishop Burnet, his Chaplain, wrote:—

"I had tried with little success to do all due freedom with the King. He did not love to be found fault with, and, though he bore everything I said very gently, yet he either discouraged me with silence, or answered me with such expressions, that they signified little or nothing."

The cooling power of silence must not be omitted amongst its exploits.

Words are heating things, and generate heat all around. To add word to word is like adding coal to coal on an already fierce fire.

There are many fires which simply go out from silent neglect. Let us only choke back the words, and we somehow choke back the thoughts too ; so close a connection is there between the word and the thought.

See how it acts in anger, as Plutarch points out :—

" He that observes anger in its rise, and sees it gradually smoking and bursting forth into fire from some chatter, or rubbishy scurillity, need have no great trouble with it, but can frequently smother it by silence and contempt. For, as a person puts out a fire by bringing no fuel to it, so with respect to anger he that does not in the beginning fan it, and stir up its rage in himself, keeps it off and destroys it."

It is the give and take process, the " giving as good as you get," which keeps a quarrel alive, and as it takes two to make a quarrel, so, once made, it takes two to keep it going. Let one drop out, and in the silence of the one, the other just stops.

" When Greek meets Greek, then is the tug of war." But, suppose they do not meet, or, meeting, one holds his tongue, there is nothing to tug. The angry talker flings fire about, and becomes the hot centre of a general conflagration, until his fires fall on the cooling waters of the silent one, and then there is nothing left to burn.

The silent power of intervention comes in as an illustration of the might of the silent.

But for the silent, who is there to mend the broken links of life snapped off by a too ready tongue ? To call on another talker is hopeless,

for he will be the centre of new dissensions. No, you must go to the silent as your judge and peacemaker.

And, in truth, he is the only man whom both sides respect.

Even then, with all his silent fitness, his work will be hard enough in all conscience. Lord Bacon, however, suggests a method which he knew tried with undeviating success.

It was the case of an old man, whose reputation for settling disputes was famous. And he achieved his great successes by a most simple process. He let both sides talk themselves out while he listened, in absolute silence, first to one and then to the other, and sometimes to both together. And, by and bye, when they were tired and winded, he stepped into the empty space, and gave his counsel, which they were now ripe and ready to receive with all meekness.

For the silent man has not committed himself to either side, and on whatever side his sympathies may really lie, neither knows it, because he has held his tongue. And, being uncommitted, he is able to hear each side, and pass a presumably unbiassed judgment.

Our party man, who is ever talking, has revealed long ago the contents of his mind, and can never, under any circumstances, be considered an impartial person. And so, for purposes of intervention, he is practically useless. And, should he attempt it, he must be a powerless mediator, because of his lack of silence in the past.

The power of *silence as a protection* must not be overlooked, for here is one of its chief powers.

There are times when to speak is dangerous, and perhaps impossible. Then the only refuge is to be silent. A man is more likely to give himself away by speech than by silence. Silence is as a rule the least incriminating thing in the world.

Silence under accusation and calumny is most advisable and necessary:—

"Should envious tongues some malice frame,
To soil or tarnish your good name,
Live it down.
Rail not in answer, but be calm,
For silence yields a rapid balm,
Live it down."

So the birds of the forest teach us, for, when the enemy is near, they lapse into silence. A moment ago all was song and twitter, and the place seemed alive with melody. Suddenly, all is hushed, and every voice is still. But, when the danger passes, and the poised hawk is gone, the melody starts afresh as a thanksgiving.

Among Bishop Tillotson's papers, found after his death, was a bundle of venomous letters received by him. On the cover was this inscription:—

"May God forgive them! I am sure I do."

He had met them with prayer and silence.

"How did you escape the axe?" was asked of one who had passed unscathed through the French Revolution.

"I made myself of no reputation, and kept silence," was the answer.

For what can you say when the venomous drops fall thick around you? If you deny them, the malicious will not believe you. As for the charitable, they never did believe them. So no particular service is done by speaking. But immerse them in silence, and while you preserve your dignity, merciful time will draw over the very charges a veil of oblivion. As a rule, the worst enemy of the maligned man is himself, for, but for his cries, no one would have taken any notice of the utterances of the spiteful.

One of Sa'adi's stories is worth telling in this connection :—

"A merchant, having suffered the loss of a thousand dinars, said to his son, 'You must not mention this matter to anyone.' 'O father,' replied the astonished son, 'it is your command, and I will not speak. But, pray tell me, what is the use of keeping it secret?'

'In order that we may not suffer two misfortunes; one, the loss of the money, and another, the reproach of our neighbours. Impart not your sorrow to your enemies, for they will exclaim, 'God avert the evil,' but, at the same time, they will rejoice at it.'"

Let us remember that half the intention of false accusers, is to drive us into the open, and set us justifying ourselves, for they know that, while one drop of insinuation will work mischief, it takes almost an ocean to neutralise the evil. So we play the enemies' game, and not our own, by setting up a public defence.

Silence is the veritable chain-armour of man,

putting a solid coat of mail between us and our malicious foes. The darts, poisoned as they are, fall off from us, leaving not a trace behind to disfigure or defile.

Woe betide the man who, in this inhospitable world, does not know the protective power of silence!

Even for subjects which are supposed to demand speech as their necessary exponent, silence is sometimes better, and more effective. No doubt it is a two-edged weapon, and must be used wisely and kindly, but *ridicule* may sometimes be silently acted, and gain in force by the silence. It is really an action rebuke, in which face, hands and body take the place of the tongue.

For words can never rightly convey the visible impression which is required for taking off the culprit. But signs hold up the mirror to the man, and set him out dressed in his right colours and aspect.

Masters sometimes use this silent method with their pupils, and parents with children, acting out the fault they wish to condemn.

This was the method adopted by St. Francis of Assisi on one historic occasion. Brother Elias, it seems, was vain, and fond of finery, and St. Francis was anxious to correct the outrageous failing which thus violated the very basis of the professingly poverty-loving brotherhood.

So one day St. Francis appeared before the brethren, clothed in a tunic of the finest texture, and with a hood behind of quite the fashionable length. It was, moreover, decked out with

rich frills, in place of the ordinary bands. Wearing this odd apparel, Francis strutted up and down before the brethren, tossing his head, and mincingly dancing along.

Nothing was said. There was no need. It was Brother Elias to the life.

Of course, Brother Elias did not like it, and it was not intended that he should, but if it brought to his soul the inconsistency of his vanity, the satire, silent though it was, did its work.

Silence is also a *powerful ingredient in sympathy.*

How often is this forgotten in our dealings with the suffering! A silent presence, a silent pressure of the hand, a silent look of tenderness, and a heavy burden has lost some of its weight. For out of such silence comes a subtle power, which bathes the wounded spirit with precious healing. Something passes into the saddened spirit which, in its silent telepathy, comforts as it flows. And where the silence is not, but only the rush of many words, the weary heart often winces as if it were lashed.

"I don't want to see that man again," said a sick one. "He talks too much."

When Professor Fawcett lay with shattered sight, he tells us that the profusion of spoken sympathy worried him almost beyond endurance.

Phillips Brooks, when visiting a sick parishioner would often do nothing but just sit down, and look the tender and kind feelings which filled his soul, and, after silently listening to the whole story of woe, would quietly get up

and go away. And the comfort he left behind was great.

It seems that when the spirit is chafed almost raw by the strains and collisions of life, what is really needed is gentle handling, the essence of kindly feeling exhaled rather than expressed, and silence is ever the best medium for this delicate, tender thing.

Later on, the quiet words may come, and the reasoned facts, but, at first, sympathy had better express itself in quieter ways. For, after all, what we want is to bring spirit to spirit, and silence is always the better way of inducing this contact:—

> "For words are weak and most to seek,
> When wanted fifty fold;
> And then if silence will not speak,
> And trembling lips and changing cheek,
> There's nothing told."

There is a *power of absorption* in silence which nothing can replace. It is for this that thinkers require quietness and retirement. He who ever gives out, and never replenishes, soon finds that his inner resources have vanished.

"When do you do your thinking?" was once asked of a voluminous writer, whose works literally poured out from the press.

Just as exhaustion requires rest and recuperation, so does the mind require a long period of silence between times.

The story of Descartes' life is one long record of this search for quiet in this uneasy and restless world. He moved from place to place, and country to country, just to find the quiet spot where he could work and think

undisturbed. It was silence which helped to make him the philosopher he was.

Hegel often insisted on this necessity of silence and retirement, and quoted with great approval the Pythagorean maxim, "Stop chatter, and take to learning."

"This duty to keep in one's talk," he writes, "can be named an essential condition of all culture and all learning. One must begin by being capable of taking in the thoughts of others, and of renouncing one's own fancies. Man's inwardness is what is won and widened in true culture. He grows not poorer in thought, or in quickness of mind, by silently containing himself."

And we cannot forget that it was Pythagoras who set every student a task of lengthened silence, that, by the fermentation of the thoughts, he might be the better prepared for the master's teaching.

"True silence," it has been well said, "is the rest of the mind, and is to the spirit what sleep is to the body, nourishment and refreshment."

Yes, silence at times even from thinking, letting the mental field lie fallow that it may have restored to it the elements lost to it by past bearings. The mind must have its silent winter, even as the fields, and the attempt to force a crop is not only to fail but to spoil the mind.

Neither must it be forgotten that in the *sphere of self-interest there is a power in silence.*

The world's sharp frosts soon nip the im-

mature growths of the mind, and to uncover what is best hidden is to invite damage and loss. Why should we go about revealing our inner poverty by premature speaking ? Silence is a becoming covering for all poverty, and he who strips his mind of it only provokes sharp retorts from the more advanced.

The old story of Apelles is much to the point in this connection, for when the Persian Magabyzus once visited his studio, and chattered loudly on the subject of art, of which he was quite ignorant, Apelles lost all patience, and sharply stopped him :—

" When you kept silence, you seemed to be somebody from your gold and purple, but now these lads who are grinding colours are laughing at your nonsense."

The man who gives himself away by speech had better first ask himself whether anybody is likely to want him, and whether he and his thoughts are worth having at any price. If not, silence would protect him from not a few inconveniences.

But need I say more on the power of silence ? In every sphere it is effective. And the silent man who thus saves his breath, may be accounted far more useful in life than he who is for ever chattering vacuities and follies. The silent is, for the most part, the strong man in life, and does the mightiest things.

CHAPTER III.

OVERSPEECH—THE NEED OF SILENCE.

WE are all in love with silence, and we all commend it. And yet we all talk incontinently, even the most silent of us.

Probably, it is only in our franker moments that we are found willing to confess that we are contributors to this general overflow. Usually, we condemn it—in others. But even when we adjudge the blame to ourselves, we do it laughingly, and just as laughingly dismiss it. Which shows that we have not yet arrived at the serious gravity of the offence.

And so we shall not do amiss to investigate this over-speech of ours, and pass a reasoned verdict upon it. It will be a clear gain, if in this garrulous world we can succeed in giving a constricting turn to the world's speech-tap, even if we only achieve a little abatement of the flow.

Of course, as we all know, the evil of over-speech is nothing new. It has been banned and cursed from the very beginning. It was Eve's over-speech to Adam which engulfed our race. A Moses "spake unadvisedly with his

lips." And the slips of humanity all the world over have been connected, more or less closely, with slips of the tongue. Speech is undoubtedly the glory of man, but just as undoubtedly is over-speech his shame.

"A mouth unbridled, of which the gates stand ever wide," as Aristophanes describes it.

This is how Socrates, or rather Plato, putting the words into Socrates' mouth, gently rebukes redundance of speech :—

"Alas ! Thæatetus, what a tiresome creature is man who is fond of talking."

"What makes you say so ? "

"Because I am disheartened at my own stupidity and tiresome garrulity ; for what other term will describe the habit of a man who is always arguing on all sides of the question ; whose dullness cannot be convinced ; and who will never leave off ? "

Now, it is certain that the plague of speech will never be abated by denunciation or abuse. We must get further back, behind the very roots of the tongue, and appeal convincingly to the minds of men. Much may be done with a man who is open to conviction, and who wants to do and say the right thing.

My purpose then is to put people out of love with all over-speech, by showing it up in all its ugly nakedness.

Show a woman that she is overdressed, and she will be ready to strip off some of her redundance. Convince a cook that her joints are more done than they should be, and she will mend her ways. Similarly, prove to a

talker that he is over-talking, and he will surely take the hint, and abate the flow. At least, if he is sensible, he will try to do so.

Now, let us open our batteries against this entrenched camp of over-speech, and endeavour to breach it.

And first I will point out that *nobody likes it.* Is not over-speech a sort of pariah in society, a blot on the landscape, a pestilence in the air, a discord in the symphony? The man or woman given to many words is treated as a public nuisance, and is avoided like a plague. If we have something to say, the world will listen to us, but if we only want to say something, they make themselves scarce.

This was no doubt the reason why Phocion so readily surrendered ten of the Athenian orators at Alexander the Great's request, knowing his orators better than Alexander did, and feeling that, if the great king was satisfied with the bargain, Athens was no less so. For ancient orators were not dissimilar to modern ones; they were too fond of listening to their own voices, and spent their time too often in

> "Dropping buckets into empty wells,
> And growing old in drawing nothing up."

Now, to bring to market unsaleable goods, which nobody wants, is not the wisest proceeding. It is just as foolish to dress your window with goods which are a drug on the market. This way bankruptcy lies. And just as stupid is the man who deals out to his neighbours a dreary wash of words, flooding the ear with what is noxious and tiresome.

There is but a thin margin between popularity and unpopularity, and nothing so quickly breaks it down as the tidal overflow of words.

The next thing that I think worthy of notice is that over-speech *defeats its own object.*

"Protagoras," said Socrates, "I happen to be a forgetful sort of man, and if one makes a long speech, I forget what the discussion is about. So, since you have met with a forgetful person, curtail your answers to me, and make them briefer if I am to follow you."

Precisely so, and the preacher, the politician, and the lecturer will do well to lay to heart that every redundant word, like water added to milk, robs the message of its richness.

Besides, to spread out the message beyond the margins of the sense is to drown it beyond resuscitation.

Dr. Parr once took a well-known lawyer to task for this same unwisdom. "Sir, you are incapable of doing justice to your argument. You weaken it by diffusion, and perplex it by reiteration."

It was on account of this wise compression, that each of Daniel Webster's words was declared to weigh a pound.

Even in conversation, when it is spread out over too large a surface, we lose ourselves in the broad waste. We feel as Darwin felt, after an interview with Humboldt:—"I can remember nothing distinctly, except that Humboldt was very cheerful, and talked much."

What endless discussions there have been

over the Battle of Waterloo! And the stream is still running briskly. Wellington very aptly commented on this "confusion worse confounded" by saying, "I shall begin to doubt whether I was really there myself."

Now, if over-speech thus defeats its own purpose, where is the rhyme or reason of perpetuating it? If a small charge will send a straighter bullet, why not diminish it?

And the counsel really holds good even when a man talks for sheer talking's sake, and descants in order to set forth his own brilliance. If by overdoing it he fails to achieve his purpose, had he not better moderate his speech, or subside altogether?

Another drawback to over-speech is the certainty of *drawing down some vigorous attacks.*

In all ages it has been so. Against the garrulous man the shafts of ridicule and satire have rained pitilessly. The wonder is that over-speech has survived so many painful assaults. Can it be that where the lips offend the skin is thicker?

Thus, when Payne Knight grew deaf, Rogers, who had suffered from being constantly reduced to the pain of being a mere listener, explained it all by saying, "'Tis from want of practice."

Jeremy Bentham called Madame de Staël "a trumpery magpie," and, because of her loquacity, refused her admission to his house.

Holland House gathered under its roof probably some of the best talkers of the day,

but not all who sat and listened appreciated its charms. One of the sufferers was Lord Melbourne, who was at last driven to say, "They cannot help it. They are not aware how much they talk."

And very neat was Greville's remark on Macaulay:—

"If he knew where to stop, as well as he knows what to say, his talk would be as attractive as it is wonderful."

It was of Macaulay, too, that one said "that he gave more than society requires, and not exactly of the kind."

Now, to sally forth in pursuit of praise, and to be met with such reproaches as these, ought to put the most garrulous man out of taste with such an unremunerative employment. There is no evidence, however, that it does so. Perhaps the disease is too deeply rooted to be dealt with from the outside.

Then again, let us emphasize the fact that over-speech *has often a bad origin.* It is not always with the best of motives that men talk so volubly.

There are some who over-talk from sheer pretentiousness, trying to appear what they are not. This was Amiel's view of it:—

"One of the worst plagues of society is the thoughtless, inexhaustible verbosity, the careless use of words, the pretence of knowing a thing because we talk about it, these counterfeits of belief, thought, love, or earnestness, which all the while are mere babble."

Amiel, too, points out the place that self-love

plays in over-speech :—" The worst of it is that self-love is behind all this babble."

Neither must we overlook the *manifest unfairness of over-speech.*

If the wisdom were all on one side, it would be only right that the talk should be on that side too ; but where others have something to say worth hearing, it is only just to them to give them a hearing.

" Buckle is a great talker," complained Darwin, " and I listened to him hardly saying a word. Nor indeed could I have done so, for he left no gaps."

And then, as if to add insult to injury, Buckle was overheard to say as he went away, " Well, Mr. Darwin's books are much better than his conversation."

Darwin appears to have been a great sufferer in this respect ; but it gave him great sympathy for fellow-sufferers.

" I remember," he writes, " a dinner at my brother's house, where were Babbage and Lyell, both of whom liked to talk. Carlyle, however, silenced everyone by haranguing during the whole dinner on the advantage of silence. After dinner Babbage in his grimmest manner thanked Carlyle ' for his interesting lecture on silence.' "

The Johnson Circle suffered from the same unfairness, for Dr. Johnson and his friends were great monopolisers of conversation. It was said of it, that " so resolute were the talkers, that a new comer had to wait for a sneeze in order to put in a sentence."

No doubt, it was an excellent discipline for those who were obliged to wait, but if they felt they had something good to say, the enforced silence must have sadly rankled.

Theophrastus has not overlooked this side of the loquacity problem in his character sketches. Very vividly he describes the waste of time and patience caused by the over-speakers of his day.

"What porch is there, what workshop, what part of a market place which they do not haunt all day long, exhausting the patience of their hearers in this way, and wearying them to death with their frictions? Thus, on a jury he will hinder his fellows from coming to a verdict, or at a theatre from seeing the play, or at a dinner party from eating, saying that, 'It is hard for a chatterer to be silent,' that, 'His tongue will run on,' that 'He could not hold it though he should be thought a greater chatterer than a swallow.' Nay, he will endure to be the butt of his own children, when, drowsy at last, they make their request to him in these terms, 'Papa, chatter to us, that we may fall asleep.'"

If fair play be a jewel, then continency of speech will shine out with the most glorious sparkle.

We are bound also, in our dissuasives from over-speech, to point out how *highly dangerous it is.*

The police are instructed to stop the over-glib tongues of their prisoners, by warning them that "whatever they say will be used in

evidence against them." And Society might, with equal reason, repeat to themselves and others the same caution.

What serious stories the Courts of our land can tell of the tongue too feebly bitted, and the word so incriminating slipping out thoughtlessly, like a spark on a powder magazine. It is not easy in talking of others to keep within the safe boundary line. And if damages, large and serious, have been exacted as the price of the luxury of unlicensed speech, who can wonder ?

Warwick wrote some wise words, when he said :—

" Give not thy tongue too great a liberty, lest it take thee prisoner. A word unspoken is like a sword in its scabbard ; thine own. If unsheathed, thy sword is in another's hand. If thou desire to be held wise, be so wise as to hold thy tongue."

A runaway horse is a sad spectacle, because of the certain damage which will follow in its mad course. But a runaway tongue is not a whit less perilous, spreading wider mischief by far. A full river is a pleasant spectacle, rolling on in its majestic course, but let it overflow, then woe betide the villages along its banks.

It is also to be noted as a weighty consideration to many that over-speech *never makes for clearness.*

This will not appeal to those who follow Hobbes in his dictum that " words were given to conceal our thoughts." But we may trust that we have to-day fallen upon a more honest race.

Now, if "brevity is the soul of wit," then *per contra* over-speech is the soul of folly.

Joubert's reproach was well deserved when he said :—

"We cannot say anything without confusing and tumbling it. The ancients smoothed and unfolded everything."

And again :—

"Words, like glass, obscure when they do not aid vision."

The truth of the matter is, that when we multiply words to excess, we do it mostly from an inner confusion, and, on the principle of Condillac, because "we never have so much to say as when we start from wrong principles." We are really fishing for a meaning, rather than producing the finished article. We are, in fact, doing what Ray, the Father of Natural History, describes :—

"He that uses many words for explaining any subject doth, like a cuttlefish, hide himself for the most part in his own ink."

This too was the verdict of Theophrastus :— "Garrulity is the discoursing of much and ill-considered thought."

There is a world of good sense in an American humourist's comment that "when the bait is worth more than the fish it is time to stop fishing."

The flood of words which goes by the name of conversation with many, reminds us, when we consider the poverty of thought borne along with it, of a child's paper boat, hurried down a great river, and, of course, hurried to destruction.

Amongst the reflections suggested by overspeech we must not forget the dismal accusation, that garrulity is a sign of *mental weakness.*

We are, I know, treading on delicate ground, and we must walk warily, for any reflection on one's sanity is hateful. And yet, let it be said boldly, that such a charge is not at all uncommon in this unkind world. Deep waters flow noiselessly ; shallow ones fill the air with their ripple. But what is musical in a brook, is discordant in man or woman.

Darwin was no uncharitable man, but even he, when Humboldt spoke interminably, felt constrained to say :—

" When I saw him, he talked beyond reason. I grieve to hear that Humboldt is failing."

It takes a wise man to hold his tongue, but any fool can let himself go and babble. Had he sense to hold himself back, and taste every word before it emerged, he would not be in so great a hurry to speak his mind, or to say what is uppermost. For a wise man knows that he cannot afford to be extravagant in his words, and that to utter words at random is as bad as to sling stones. A verbal spendthrift is soon face to face with ruin.

One needs constantly to lay to heart what Bishop Creighton once said, that " the length of time that anyone can talk during the day with any reality in his words can never be very large."

Lady Hester Stanhope had much eccentric cleverness, but, with all her native genius, she had but little control over her tongue. We are

told of her that she entertained her visitors with monologues of alarming extent. Dr. Meryon, her medical attendant, had to submit to the verbal torrent for from eight to thirteen hours at a stretch, while some of her visitors were known to faint from the fatigue of her long output. There must have been something unhinged and unbalanced somewhere.

There is one consideration of great weight for those who can look a little ahead, and that is how sorry it will make us by and bye. For, certainly, a day of regret will come, if not many of them, from excess of talk.

How much would most of us give to recall the *stinging words* of the past! We uttered them carelessly enough, but they have left a memory altogether black, which we can never whiten over. We have the greatest sympathy with Dr. Jowett's verdict on his past utterances :—" Half the things I said, I wish unsaid."

Lady Holland was once taken to task for her very caustic tongue, and her only defence was, " I didn't mean to harm anyone, but merely to poke the fire." It was a pity though that she poked it so hard as to scatter the flaming embers about the room.

Then there is the memory of *waste* to be suffered, wasted efforts, wasted opportunities, where better and brighter words would have helped. Rogers, the poet, was once heard to regret that he had sacrificed himself to conversation too much, using up for it thought which would have brought better fame.

The memory of *insincere words* will blister

too in the days to come, when we let our minds travel over the past and its mistakes. It is so easy to take good words on the lips, and to say grand things; but to mean them, and to say them truly, is another matter. Tried by a diviner standard, we know now how false they rang, and how low was the motive which prompted them.

George Eliot commented on one great preacher of her day, whom she went to hear, and her verdict was:—

"I imagine it is his fortune, or rather his misfortune, to have talked too much, and too early, about the greatest things."

Good for us if some friendly counsel came to check the vocal output of youth, and warned us not to let speech run before mind and heart.

There would be fewer wild oats of speech sown if the sower had imagination enough to think of the harvest which is surely coming.

One final word I would add to my already long list of suggested restraints, and that is that the *higher the subject, the worse the overspeech.*

Many of us have the idea that on some subjects we cannot say too much, and that, let them be good enough, the stream may flow abundantly. Religion has been thought to be one of them. But is it so?

Words on sacred themes should be measured not by number but by weight. So long as the heart goes with the words, the words may flow, but once vitality stops, the reality evaporates, and the words should stop too. We cannot

depreciate too much the talking of religion for talking's sake. It degenerates into cant. Neither does it mend matters to call such talk "faithfulness," and "bearing one's witness." Religion is debased and dishonoured by soulless talk.

To say more would be to violate my own rules, and I should be an over-writer on over-speech. So I will conclude with a story told by Bishop Stubbs, the historian, at his own expense.

He tells us how in a dream Bishop Creighton appeared to him, and said severely :—

"You have one fault; you talk too much, too much in public, and a great deal too much in private."

Mr. A. C. Benson, to whom he told the dream, demurred to the justness of its denunciation.

"Oh, I have a great belief in dreams," replied the Bishop, "as revealing the weakness to which we are blind in waking hours."

CHAPTER IV.

THE CULTURE OF SILENCE.

IF silence be so desirable a quality, may it not be cultivated? In the commercial world the lack of any commodity soon leads to its production. Objects of value, for which there is a keen demand, are soon multiplied. Why should not the world's universal demand for more silence be gratified? The ingenuity and energy of man is surely large enough to make the supply at least equal to the demand.

No doubt, the difficulties of such a process as silence-culture are many, but difficulties ought not to daunt brave and keen men.

But, it will be argued, will any pupils be forthcoming? Are not men too much in love with loquacity to really desire a faculty for silence? Moreover, the chief offenders are unconscious of their fault.

And where will you find a teacher, capable of imparting so delicate and rare a lesson? He will either be an offender himself, or be so much in love with silence as to find himself incapable of breaking it.

And some will even contend that the faculty of silence cannot be imparted, because silent

men are, like poets, born, not made. No doubt, nature has much to do with our gifts and graces, but bad habits can certainly be corrected, and good habits communicated. "Where there's a will, there's a way."

Perhaps the greatest difficulty is to be found in the matter of methods, because the whole realm is so largely unexplored. The tracks are invisible, and no one has blazed a way. But a way can surely be made, for have we not all some idea about it? The world is not a young one, neither have the minds of men been idle. And so we shall find that, once the feasibility of silence-culture is accepted, suggestions will swarm in from all quarters.

What is needed is make a beginning, and to strike out a rough working scheme for immediate application; not theories, but rough-hewn suggestions within the compass of all.

It is not, however, quite true that teachers of silence do not exist. Teachers do exist of a kind; not that they are polished and scientific; they are rather of the heavy, bludgeon type.

You will find them in rough and vehement people, who, somewhat impolitely, bid another "Shut up." Most of us have before now suffered from them. "Hold your tongue!" "Silence!" sent forth like pistol shots, are quite familiar to our ears.

These are not pleasant or nice teachers, and are, as a matter of fact, more irritating than instructive. But they do a sort of rough work, which tells for a time for good. I say for a

time, because nobody supposes that such peremptory cries can ever lead to a cure.

More authoritative are those public officials, like the Silentarii in the Imperial Palace of ancient Constantinople, or the ushers in our own Courts of Justice, or the policemen in our streets. But they are after all only instigators to a passing silence, not professors of the art.

Any parent or schoolmaster with any authority can command silence, but the exacting of it is very different from creating it. Authority never imparts a love for silence, or gives that inner power which shall be able to close the lips at will.

And, surely, this is what we must aim at; not the cowing of that wild beast, Over-speech, with the whip. The real taming of it can only be done by deeper work, and by reaching the mind and spirit. Let a pupil see that silence is better and more advantageous than too much speech, and he will be ready to learn; for what we covet is generally half secured by the wish.

A *larger mind makes for silence.*

Here is lesson number one. Only push out the boundaries of a man's mental horizon, and we go far to close his lips.

For it is evident that garrulity is a disease, largely due to lack of knowledge. The tongue runs on, because the mind is shallow. It is easy for mill-wheels to run fast when there is no corn in the hopper. And, because there is nothing to grind, and all that moves the

tongue is the love of listening to its own music, the talker just runs on without stopping.

For knowledge is like a brake on a vehicle, always ready to act when the need arises, and stopping when there is nothing more to be said to advantage. What happens when the brake is non-existent, and the carriage is going downhill, is evident enough. Ignorance lets it go. Wisdom stops short.

Is not this the reason that children and youth are so voluble ? They know no better. They wish to be in evidence. They like to join in, and not be left out. The jabbering idiot is an extreme example, and ought to be a restraining one.

For this reason philosophers are mostly of the silent sort, and, when they speak, speak slowly and hesitatingly. They know the value of words ; they know the other side of the argument ; they grasp the many shades of thought, and the difficulty of expressing them accurately ; and, moreover, they have a great reverence for truth, and fear to smother her delicate features with too many wrappings.

And most of us, as we grow older, are less free with our words, because we have garnered more wisdom than in the early talkative days, and see the pitfalls on either side of the path. The old conceit is, for the most past, gone, and we are not quite so sure of ourselves as of yore. We know both sides now. And so the stream slows down bit by bit, and we lapse into more and more silence.

And, besides, we discover that people are not

so keen on hearing us as we fancied. It took us long perhaps to find this out; but it came. And, preferring to fall in with the general mood, we gave our friends and neighbours the benefit of our silence.

Leslie Stephen well illustrates this tendency of larger research in restricting the output of words:—

"He must be content" (the biographical writer) "to toil for hours with the simple result of having to hold his tongue. Where nothing is known, it seems simpler that nothing should be said. Men may have to consult a whole series of books before discovering that negative fact."

With less research there is more imagination, and the imaginative are ever the talkers, depending only for matter on their own inner fancies. Like the spider, they weave their strands out of their own bowels. And from thence there are found limitless supplies for endless talk and chatter.

Cultivate the busy life.

This also is an important rule for the cultivation of silence. For idleness is undoubtedly the fruitful mother of talk. At any rate, the idle are the guiltiest. Having nothing special to do, they talk. With talk they fill up the broad intervals of life. Besides, it is the easiest of all things to achieve. And so they talk.

That this is so may be proved by the simple fact that when men are busiest they are least garrulous. They neither want to talk themselves nor to listen to anybody else. Talk is

too great a waster to be indulged in when work is pressing for fulfilment.

This was the evident feeling of Aldo, the great Venetian printer, who set up over his door this notice :—

"No leisure for gossiping. Those only are admitted who come on business ; which they are specially requested to despatch in as few words as possible."

That talk is a great disturber of good work is seen by the silent way in which great workers pursue their tasks.

Edison silently bends all his energies to his brilliant experiments, and will not be disturbed on any pretence, not even to take his meals. Tattlers have no place in his workshops.

Mr. John Ball finds that his golf is the better for silence, and is said to make his rounds without speaking a single word. His example might well be followed by those irascible gentlemen who give way to many expletives, more strong than choice.

It was Sir Ernest Shackleton's experience that when he and his comrades found themselves in tight places, and needed all their wits about them, they relapsed into utter silence.

Just as there is no room in the bushel filled with wheat for any chaff, so in the filled life there is no room for idle words.

Be a good listener is another golden rule.

But how rare the good listener is we all of us know. It is amusing to stand by, and watch a group of talkers, all talking at the same time, and eager to talk more. What the others say

is most unimportant. So the conversation consists mostly of half sentences and smothered endings. But here and there sits the quiet listener, who holds his tongue amidst the babble, and tries to catch something useful.

This was the merit of Fanny Burney; the "dear little Burney" of Dr. Johnson. She could write well, and she could, if she cared, talk well. But her supreme talent was the faculty of listening well. It was said of her:—

"Every great talker dwelt affectionately on her bright and animated silence."

Of course, there are varied types of listeners, not all alike good. There is the listener who yawns, and looks as bored as he is. There is the keen listener, who shows that he wants to know, and listens carefully to know it.

Now, to listen well means that speech is in abeyance for the time. You cannot both talk and listen. This is why good listening is a cure for over-speaking. And what an excellent discipline it is to turn the energy from the tongue to the ear! It helps to break a bad habit most effectually, for the more we listen, the less we shall talk.

Study the art of compression.

Emulate the wise tradesman who wraps up his goods in neither too small nor too large a package.

If a tabloid will contain a dose, why drown it in a pint of water? And if five words will express your idea, why use fifty?

It is curious what creatures of extremes we are, and how we must go either North or South,

and never between. One would think that there was nothing besides brevity which is bald and volubility which is expansive.

Take your shy man, who will sit in silence for hours, and then, having broken the ice, will never stop. Moderation is very commendable; yet how rare it is!

It was said of Sir James Stephen that:—

"He was not talkative, and would often sit silent in the company of other men; but when once he had started, he had much to say of all things human and divine."

It was the same with Cardinal Newman as a a young man at Oxford, who tells us in his Apologia, that it was said of him:—

"Here is a man who when he is silent will never begin, but when he once begins to speak will never stop."

The old Oracles were ever close, and short, and pungent, and would scarcely have been deemed oracles had they been lengthy. "Know thyself" was just the right length, and was as weighty as it was short. The old Delphic oracle was a standard for all time.

Neither is this counsel to compression a strange one, for one nation at least made it a matter of national importance. The Lacedemonians trained their young citizens to the habits of silence and brevity.

If we make our speech exactly fit the idea we need to express, what more do we want? Is a man the better clothed for having his clothing hanging in bags around him? As with dresses and coats, so let it be with our words, let them

be an exact fit, the thought neither too tight, nor too full and baggy. But all this needs compression and skill.

"Let thy words be counted," said Dante. And if they be weighed too, it would not be amiss.

Keep off dangerous ground is a necessary warning to those who would fain cultivate silence.

There are provocative people, to whom we should give a wide berth, knowing that in their company the tongue will run away with us. Some of them are crafty, and wish to make capital of us. Others are curious, and would like to know our secrets. Many have no motive, but love a clack with anybody who will keep the ball rolling. But, whatever their reason, such people are too dangerous to be friendly with, and had better be avoided, for they bring out our worst and not our best features.

Carlyle expressed the feelings of many when he wrote of some of his tempters :—

"The fact is I am only too well cared for and attended to. The only evil is that they will keep me in talk. Alas! how much happier I should be not talking or talked to. I require an effort to get my victuals eaten for talk."

There are dangerous subjects, too, to be avoided, if we would attend to the cultivation of silence, subjects which stir up all the voluble tendencies of the heart. A hundred subjects leave us cold, but the hundred and first releases the inner springs, quickens the blood to semi-madness, and sets us off helter-skelter. It is over this dangerous topic that we require to

run up the danger-signal, and shake out its folds to the breeze.

To one, some phase of politics will appeal with terrible success. To another some heresy, all his own, will set the tongue wagging at an absurd pace. To others, some hobby, in which they think they excel, will release the spring, and set the alarm off with its deafening whirr. At such times all self-constraint is gone, and the tongue, mastered absolutely, runs away at top speed.

Even when the subject is a worthy one, and the motive good, excess is inadvisable, for it defeats its own purpose, deafening ears, when we should rather be winning hearts.

Then there are dangerous habits to be avoided, if we would remain masters of our tongues.

Strong drink is a huge loosener of the muscles of the tongue. "When the wine is in, the wit is out," and also the words many. If total abstinence from strong drink will ensure total abstinence from foolish words, let it be practised; it is commendable. The pity is that not only does strong drink loosen the organ of speech; it sends the stream of verbiage off in evil directions. Braggart speech, speech that is intemperate, speech that is often unclean, speech which reveals one's own and others' secrets, may easily be induced by the free use of alcohol. So, if we must have our social festivities, let us beware of the danger of one of the usual concomitants of the feast. There is an *abandon* about even a tea-party which

may, with advantage, be carefully watched. It is not the tea, as some have unkindly suggested, but the spirit of the people, all at their ease and unrelaxed, which constitutes the danger. There is no evil intention; men and women just slip into tattling ways, which, by a smooth incline, lead to positive scandal. It is just as well for the student in silence to be here too on his guard.

Talking without an object is another rock of danger to those who wish to steer a happy course, without accident. It is but rarely that objectless talk does not run in a wrong channel. It is just as unprofitable as when the mill-stones play upon one another, with nothing between; they do no good, and they grind each other away. It was said of Garibaldi that no man did better work than he, when there was work to be done, but in the intervals he was apt to run to waste.

"Our poor Garibaldi," said Medici, "allows himself to be persuaded by discredited men to go to Turin. He ruins himself in times of inaction. He talks too much, writes too much, and listens too much to those who know nothing."

"Nobody goes so far," Cromwell once remarked, "as the man who does not know where he is going."

But it is not enough to keep off dangerous ground; we must take the positive side and *choose the safest ground.* For if there are manifest danger spots, there also are manifest safety spots.

When Dean Stanley stayed with the Hares at Hurstmonceaux, he declared that he reaped one distinct benefit, which he gratefully chronicled, "the diminution of my gossiping tendency."

And this suggests that for one who would fain learn to be silent, it is advisable to keep the company of the silent:—

"It is as dangerous to keep company with one whose tongue is hung too loosely as to ride in a carriage whose linch-pin is loose."

The garrulous may be good company, and very amusing, but they are not as safe as the silent for the man who wants to learn how to hold his tongue.

Kingslake, writing of Napoleon III, traces his undoubted powers of silence to having companied so much with silent people in the days of his exile:—

"Partly from habit acquired in the secret societies of the Italian Carbonari, partly from long years passed in prison, and partly, too, as he once said, from the intercourse with the calm, self-possessed men of the English turf, he had derived the power of keeping long silence. But he was not by nature a reserved or a secret man."

Certainly, it is better to be alone than to cultivate the society of the garrulous; at least if we are qualifying for a Silence Degree.

It is the height of wisdom too, if we would abate the flow of words, to *watch our moods.*

We are creatures of moods, and are as variable as the weather. No man who wishes to achieve anything in life must give the rein to moods.

For they are not so little under control as many fancy. Moods must be managed and directed if we are not to become their victims.

There are times when we are in the mood to be silent, and there are times when we are in the mood to speak. It is in these latter that we have need to be on our guard.

Moreover, there are moods which insist on speaking, and in which speech is least under control, and these are naturally the most dangerous of all.

In times of *temper*, what a crowd of words flows to the lips! All inner barriers are swept aside, and the hot venomous words come pouring out like vitriol. There are few of us who can be trusted to say wise things when anger boils. If words could kill, what a number of murderers there would be!

It was said of one, and might equally well be said of many:—

"When he felt strongly about a question, he could hardly trust himself to speak, as then, he easily became angry. He was conscious that his anger had a tendency to multiply itself in the utterance, and for this reason dreaded even to scold a servant."

If we cannot check the temper, which is better, let us at any rate check the expression of it, and keep utter silence until the evil passes. One turn of the tap may be our undoing.

Vanity, like anger, may easily lead to undue precipitation of speech. In its fishing for compliments, in its efforts to be to the fore, in its insistence on its own excellences, we discover

splashing things, which may too readily overflow into rivers. Vanity, in order to limit its output, must keep silence on all subjects connected with self, if it would be on the safe side. Here is its danger point.

But why illustrate further? All the moods we have considered urge to over-talk, and unless they be watched and curbed, will lead to verbal mischief. In fact, we may say that all garrulity springs from moods which are unchecked and allowed to wanton at will. And the worse the mood, the worse the overflow of speech, because the more poisonous.

One favourite maxim, which children often hear from their parents and teachers, is "*Think before you speak*," and it is none the less wise for its familiarity.

No doubt, it is to sheer thoughtlessness that so much of the verbiage of the day is due. For words are given us to express our thoughts, and, if there is no thought, and therefore nothing to express, why talk at all?

I have heard of men who were anxious to consume time, who spoke for hours to no purpose, except to waste them. It was little to them whether they spoke sense or nonsense, so long as the clock's hands went round the proper number of times.

There was one who said that "words were given to conceal our thoughts," but he was satirical, and knew that he was not speaking the truth. If he said that words were often used to conceal the poverty of our thoughts, he would have been saying a truer thing. For it

is a simple matter of knowledge that most of the heavy talkers talk from the teeth, and from no deeper. In fact, they speak before they think.

"Before uttering an important sentence, let the tongue go seven times round the mouth," says the French proverb, which is a circuitous way of saying, "Think before you speak."

The story of the lad, who was asked what sort of a bird he would like to be, if he had the choice, answered wisely and quaintly:—

"I should like to be a swan, because it has a long neck. And so if I had anything to say, I should have plenty of time for reflection before it came to my mouth."

If we were to be checked in future by some monitor, whenever we were on the point of speaking, with the query, "Have you thought out what you are going to say?" how many of our words would die in the throat, and never come to utterance!

It would be to advantage also if *we cultivated a thinner skin.*

As it is, the talkers of the world dodge the hailstones of criticism which fall on all sides of them, and try to think that such criticisms are not meant for them. They have thickened their skins, when it would have been better if they had made them thinner. They have called the world's rebukes impertinent interferences, and uncalled for insults. And so it has happened that the best, if the fiercest, of tutors, have failed of their purpose.

My counsel is that we cultivate such a thin skin, that henceforward we get the full

advantage of men's onslaughts, whether deserved or not. We shall suffer, but we shall gain by the lessons they give.

Perhaps Professor Jowett's secretary did not deserve the rebuke his employer gave him one day, when having innocently remarked, for the sake of saying something, "I believe there are more dogs than people in the streets to-day," he was snubbed at once with the remark:— "If you have nothing more sensible to observe, you had better be silent altogether."

Nor should I have liked to be addressed as the Rev. John Berridge addressed one of his visitors, who had consumed much of his time by talking about herself:—

"Madam, before you withdraw, I have one piece of advice to give you, and that is when you go into company again, after you have talked an hour without intermission, I recommend it to you to stop a while, and see if any other of the company has anything to say."

And who would not have smarted under that withering rebuke of Lord Bacon to Coke, his great opponent, who had been pouring out on himself much laudation:—

"The less you speak of your own greatness, the more I will think of it."

It is a pity to make yourself a target for the world's witticisms, but, if you do, it is a greater pity to deny that you are a proper target, or that the shots were meant for you.

The costliness of unwise speech is a consideration which one, who is anxious to learn how to avoid it, will do well to ponder.

There are few, if any, who can afford to be free spoken. It is too costly a luxury. For see how it drains away the treasures which men count dear.

There is the penalty of not learning, as Democritus reminds us :—

" He who is fond of contradiction, and makes many words, is incapable of learning anything right. How can we obtain of the treasures of others, if, instead of listening, we do all the talking ourselves ? "

We drop a barrier between our minds and the minds of abler men, which effectually bars the passage for their good things. It is well to remember this.

But it not only costs us the loss of good, by closing up the avenue along which it may come, but it confirms us in our own narrownesses. What we all want is to get our minds broadened by contact with wiser minds, and to have our frozen ideas loosened by the warmth of a more living thought. It is the clash of minds which shakes off accumulating cobwebs, and only as we allow the freer air of larger minds to circulate through ours can we expect them to be robust and healthy. All this requires listening, rather than chattering ; reception, rather than output. Can we afford all this mental seclusion ?

Then the undue talker loses popularity ; the very thing which it is his ambition to attain by talking so much.

There are many other certain losses, which an over-fast tongue meets with, and which

should be duly weighed. One of them Froude mentions, in connection with Carlyle :—

" He knew well enough that, if he resolutely tried, he could succeed. But to succeed he knew also that he would have to part with his natural modesty, the noblest part of him, as of every man. He must part too with his love of truth. The orator, in the rush and flow of words, cannot always speak truth, he cannot even try to speak truth, for he has to speak to an audience which reacts upon him, and he learns, as he goes on, to utter not the facts, as he knows them to be, but the facts shaped and twisted to please his hearers."

Another puts the loss of the pretentious speaker, when he describes him as :—

" Hunting for epigrammatic ways of saying what you do not think."

Surely, the spendthrift of words is as truly on the way to bankruptcy as the spendthrift of money. I say then again we cannot afford such extravagance, and we shall do well to save a little, and to husband our verbal resources.

There is one method of cultivating silence, which has the merit of having good sponsors, and that is, that we should *talk to ourselves.*

There is the method of soliloquy. It has the disadvantage of appearing somewhat silly, and has indeed been marked down as the common action of the insane, or of those on the way to insanity. But if a man does not mind appearances, and feels sure of his own sanity, there is no reason in the world why he should not adopt some such method for his self-training in silence.

Of course, we should limit the treatment to those moments when the inner pressure is becoming intolerable, and we must speak or die, and when it is indispensable that we should clarify our thoughts and ideas by outer expression.

Shaftesbury, in his Characteristics, thus discusses the propriety of such soliloquy :—

" Where the harm would be of spending some discourse, and bestowing a little breath and clear voice on ourselves, I cannot see. We might peradventure be less noisy, and more profitable in company, if, at convenient times, we discharged some of our articulate sounds and spake to ourselves *viva-voce* alone. For company is an extreme provocation to fancy, and, like a hot-bed in gardening, is apt to make our imaginations sprout too fast. But by this anticipating remedy we may effectually fight against the inconvenience."

There is a further advantage in this self-accosting that, for those who love to hear their own voice, it will be easy and delightful. At any rate, whether we use the method or not, we may as well know that it is usable when the need is urgent.

Let me commend, too, to the student in the art and practice of silence, *the language of signs.* Exceedingly primitive, it is none the less expressive for that. And where language is impossible, we can do well with the universally understood sign. May we not restore it to its legitimate place, as a substitute for over-speech ?

Carlyle once betook himself to this method

when hard pressed and hungering for pure silence. A devoted admirer, who had determined to get speech with the philosopher, and fell upon the expedient of asking him the time of the day, was effectually checkmated by the production of the watch, and an expressive pointing to the hands.

I have heard, too, of an eloquent preacher, who succeeded in diverting a too officious man, who craved a word when he was on his way to church, by pointing to his wrapped up throat, and passing silently on.

Herbert Spencer, in his essay on the Philosophy of Style, dwells on the comparative force with which simple ideas are communicated by signs.

"To say 'Leave the room' is less expressive than to point to the door. Placing the finger on the lips is more forcible than whispering, 'Do not speak.' A beckoning of the hand, is better than 'Come here.' No phrase can convey the idea of surprise so vividly as opening the eyes and raising the eyebrows. A shrug of the shoulders would lose much by translation into words."

Lady Dorothy Nevill reminds us of a device of her mother for ensuring silence when the father was in no mood for conversation, namely, by catching her eye, and significantly looking down on her plate where her knife and fork had been carefully crossed, a sign well understood.

Some cultivate the gift of silence by *going into retreat.*

There are *literary retreats* which serve the

purpose well, where we can go and read, and where the would-be interrupter is ever met by the legend, "Strict silence is requested in this room." It is an effectual muzzle for self-respecting people. For those who wish to be steeped in a little compulsory silence, no place is better.

Then there are *physical retreats*, where the rest cure is sedulously sought. Here every organ is rested to repletion, and the tongue is also necessarily rested, for the sufficient reason that there is nobody to speak to, all being under the rest treatment alike. An invaluable spot this for our student. A trifle dull, no doubt, but think of the mastery it is likely to give over a too ready tongue.

There are *holiday retreats*, too, where the silence is profound because it is nature's silence. But it must not be a Winter Sports resort, or the silence will have but a poor chance of finding satisfaction, either by day or night. Let it for choice be a quiet, unknown place, where you are almost alone with the mountain and the glen.

Religious retreats are good, too, for those desirous to gain even a temporary mastery of the tongue, for the rule of silence is of the strictest. Hearts are intended to be busier than tongues, and the speaking is more to God than man.

It is true that these are but temporary devices, inasmuch as we have to emerge into public life again. But if in our retirement we have learned the charms of silence, if we have

succeeded in achieving a temporary mastery over our unruly organ of speech, and if we have gleaned some good harvest from the silence, it is not unlikely that we shall exert ourselves in the open too, to hold the tongue, and speak less and better.

Look to the inner spirit is an important reflection for those who wish to possess the necessary check on verbal surpluses.

It is easy to snap out, "Shut your mouth," but how is it to be done when the pressure within is so tremendous? We have all known, and perhaps possessed, clocks, which, at some abnormal moment, begin to strike, and keep on striking until completely run down. We know that it is not the hands which are to blame, but the inner works which need correction. And so, off goes the noisy thing to the watchmaker.

Would that there were some power to deal with our strike and works, like the watchmaker with the clock! But is there not?

Socrates claims to have possessed just such an inner mentor, his dæmon he called him, which he says "frequently restrained me in the midst of speaking." He was ever on the watch for this inward check, and as loyally obeyed him.

Is a Christian worse off than a heathen, so called? Surely not. There is a Divine Spirit, Who dwells in the hearts of men and women who are willing to give Him lodgment, and Who, sitting at the very roots of things, corrects what is wrong, strengthens what is weak, and

gives the victory over all extravagances of speech and action. The old parable of the sweetened waters is always pertinent and new, the tree which, entering into the bitter water, cured the evil. For us, it is the tree of the Cross of the Saviour.

We can hardly expect a new tongue until there comes to us a new heart. Change the springs, and the outflow will be changed too.

There is a better help than man's.

There is the way of prayer, in which we can call down a strength which excels. If I have put it last, it is not because it is the least effectual remedy, for, as a matter of fact, it is the remedy *par excellence*, without which all other remedies must lose their full value.

"Keep the door of my lips," is a petition which we should all offer.

For see how it meets the need at its greatest, as well as at its least.

The best remedy, as I have said already, must work from within; from the inner platform of the man. What other remedy than the Divine one can achieve the mastery of the tongue? The Divine Spirit, mingling with the human spirit, is on the spot where the evils rise.

This best remedy, too, will put us out of taste with redundant speech, and make it noxious and unpalatable to us. For we are not ready to do those things against which we inwardly rebel. But this is exactly what the Divine help does, changing the tendencies of the heart.

This best remedy, also, will endow us with a vigilance not to be surprised, keeping us so alert to the evil that we shall be ready to checkmate it at the very start. As it is, most of us are ever falling asleep, or at least nodding with drowsiness. Divine help banishes this somnolence when allowed to work, and so puts us on our guard against the coming and threatening danger.

But prayer must be maintained, and it must be believing prayer. It must be more than experiment. And the heart that trusts for victory over one sin must seek deliverance from all.

Do these suggestions for the culture of silence seem too large an order? Perhaps so. But is it not worth all the efforts we can make? At any rate, we may be assured, whether we venture on the path or not, that it does lead to the quiet tongue.

CHAPTER V.

SPHERES OF SILENCE.

ONE of the great arts of life is to strike exactly at the hour; neither before nor after. It is for lack of this special sense, that we are either too early or too late in our actions, and so miss the gold of the target, or fail to hit the target at all. If some good fairy would only whisper in our ears the vital "Now," we should shed fewer tears, and be spared many a heart ache.

If this be true with our actions, it is even more so with our words and silences. We are, all of us, given to speak and be silent in the wrong places. Our music is both out of time and out of tune.

Now, it is this difficulty that I propose to meet in this chapter, in connection with our silences. I want to point out certain spheres in which silence is peculiarly graceful, and spheres in which it is preferable to speech. Perhaps it will enable us to thrust out further the boundaries of the great empire of silence.

In the *self-region* be silent.

To praise oneself is not considered wise by

sensible people. "Self praise is no recommendation," we are reminded. "Blowing one's own trumpet," men call it, with the suggestion that it makes the worst of music. "Is your trumpeter dead?" we ask of boasters, with a concern which is full of satire.

Marcus Aurelius thought that self-praise was limited to humans, and wrote that "neither a fleet horse nor a greyhound make a noise when they have done well; nor a bee, when she has made a little honey."

To him "men should be like the vine which is satisfied by being fruitful, and bears a bunch of grapes without expecting any thanks for it."

We do well to be silent, too, in the sphere of our grievances. Most of us are very tender, and we are very easily hurt, and, being perhaps a little uncharitable, we imagine slights as deliberately inflicted, and cry out lustily.

Now and then, I am afraid, we are apt to "cry out before we are hurt."

It is well that we should learn that the general public is not so concerned about our grievances as we are, and that people are not so ready to listen as we are to proclaim them. So it is better to bear even real injustices silently than to tell them from the house-top. We shall not so well relieve our feelings, but we shall spare the feelings of others.

Moreover, there is much that is healing in the bandages of silence, if well wrapped round. Silence is one of nature's balms, and an opiate of rare value.

It is said of a certain bishop that he once

poured out his woes into the ears of St. Francis de Sales, and got this for answer :—

" In truth, these people are much to blame to have thus dealt with you. But I can only see one thing in the whole matter that is really of importance to you."

" What may that be ? "

" That you should be wiser than they, and hold your tongue."

Our sorrows, too, are the better for the silent treatment. We all have them, and we all suffer from them, but it is a pity to rub them in, which happens when we talk too freely about them. Talking somehow keeps things alive which had better die in silence. Like a wound which we are always opening the bandages to look at, our sorrows are rather aggravated than helped by such attention.

And so with our sufferings, let us give them a soothing bath of silence.

It is curious how the concentration of the mind on an ailment aggravates it, and how we may start an ache here or there by letting the mind dwell upon it. There is a tremendous power in suggestion, and we do well to use it for good rather than for evil. Now, telling of our sufferings may only too easily keep them alive, and aggravate them. This is why silence acts for good. To the doctor or the nurse tell all, for it is their duty to know, but to the chance caller be silent.

Besides, why sadden the hearts of others unnecessarily, or shock their susceptibilities without need ? It is very like the exposure by

beggars of their stumps and sores to awaken your pity and alms which is so common at church doors on the Continent. To morbid natures it may be even disastrous.

It was this which led the proprietor of a Hydropathic Establishment to put up a warning notice in his house that patients were particularly requested not to speak of their ailments at meals. He knew that silence was a healthier thing.

Our doubts, too, let us cover over with the mantle of silence, for they are better covered than revealed. It is, however, the tendency of doubt to ventilate itself, and to seek company for its support; thus spreading itself. But how unfair it is to thrust into the midst of feeble men and women crude and undigested thoughts, which people are pleased to call their doubts! Had they found footing instead of wobbling in the mire and quicksand, they might have a message, but they have not. It is miserable fare they are offering. Silence would be much more becoming.

Dr. Dale's advice to doubters of great truths was this :—

"After making a definite conclusion, as the result of prayer and study, that they should be silent for a year, before they attempted to draw others to the same judgment."

Dr. John Duncan wrote to the same effect :—

"I have no patience with C's Hades. I have a hundred such speculations, all very good for myself. But I have buried them when I have done with them, and never unearthed them

since for others. They lie in heaps in one common grave, and mother earth is on them. What does he mean by unearthing his to the gaze of men ? "

Our anxious fears and apprehensions may just as well be smothered in thick folds of silence, lest we confer upon them a reality which they rarely possess. Let the phantom be a phantom, and let us not try to precipitate it into solidity. Yet how often do we find timorous souls whipping themselves into a frenzy by descanting on them !

It will help us somewhat if we reason a little with ourselves on the matter of the fears which have passed and gone. How often have they turned out to be nothing but mere empty shadows ! And even when they were real, how rarely were they as bad as we fancied !

Anxieties are much like a fire in a house ; keep the windows shut, cut off all access to the air, and it will probably die out of itself. But ventilate it, and the conflagration will be fed into fury.

We confer a fictitious value on troubles which we only imagine.

Silence under calumny may be hard to practise, but it is worth the effort. There is no better refuge to hide in than silence. Men generally think otherwise, and fancy that the handiest weapon, and the most effective, to fly to is speech.

What would you ? Would you use the fish-wife method, and deal fiery invectives ? Or would you try gently to reason out the matter ?

How can you argue with malice, or convince the false? It is ill fighting with a sweep. No, the best course, and, as a rule, the only course, is to be silent. There is a dignity in silence which reveals the strong man, and the worst of enemies get tired of attacking him who is wise enough to ignore them. The barking cur, if taken seriously, may be found to bite, but it is rarely that he does more than bark when we calmly ignore him and go our way with neither a word nor a blow.

When Dr. Temple was attacked for his essay in that famous book, Essays and Reviews, he staked out for himself a silent course, and steadily maintained it to the end:—

"I believe it to be my duty to hold my tongue. I cannot do everything, but I can certainly do that, and I will; but with what pain I cannot express."

Carlyle, writing to Caroline Fox, said the same thing:—

"If I had a Fortunatus' hat, I would fly into deepest silence, perhaps into green Cornwall towards the Land's End, far from Babylon, and its jarring, its ugly fog and mud."

And so Addison, in the Tatler:—

"Silence never shows itself to such great advantage as when it is made the reply to calumny and defamation, provided that we give no just occasion for them."

In life's losses silence is a gain and a comfort, for it enables us to turn our thoughts to One better and stronger than man, and deepens in our spirits the consciousness that, if He is left,

we are not so poor after all. Talk, and complaint, and outbursts throw up a wall between Him and us, and make the troubles greater.

Silence was Aaron's resource when his sons lay dead at his feet:—"Aaron held his peace."

In a Churchyard in the West of England, over a child's grave, is the following epitaph, set up by the bereaved father:—

"And he asked, 'Who gathered the flower'?
And the gardener answered, 'The Master.'
And his fellow-servant held his peace."

The Rabbis used to say, "Hold no man responsible for his utterances in times of grief," and we do not as a rule. But it is well to hold ourselves responsible. For silence is better, if it be the silence of acquiescence, of faith, and of thankfulness.

"Most trials," Dr. Jowett wrote, "whether fanciful or real, are best borne in silence. A year afterwards we are glad that we never mentioned them."

When the dead Wellington was borne through the streets of London, and a stricken people looked sadly on, Carlyle mentioned their deep and respectful silence:—

"All people stood in deep silence. Silence alone is respectable on such occasions."

It is a big region, this region of self where silence is called to reign, and self will be all the better and stronger when it does reign absolutely. It will not be easy to preserve silence in difficult circumstances, but difficulties are meant to be overcome, and not yielded to.

We must now press on to other regions, where silence makes the best of presidents, and the most becoming.

Let us keep silence, too, in the region of *other people's selves.*

The tendency to meddle in our neighbour's concerns is well nigh universal. Our interest in what they say, and do, or do not do, is of the deepest. We are more concerned in them than we are in ourselves. And, as a rule, where there is much interest there is much talk. This is why it behoves us to meet the temptation by silence.

Of course, unutterable mischief flows from this free-trade in speech, for, if men like to talk of others, others are not so well pleased that they should become the topics of idle talk. For who does not know that it is not so much the creditable things which are discussed, as the suspected, discreditable ones? Certainly, idle talk over tea tables and in clubs is not always charitable and kind.

Now, if we cannot be trusted, or trust ourselves, to deal with the reputations of others, had we not better let them alone, and keep a still tongue in our heads? It is infinitely safer, and it is infinitely kinder.

Let us be silent about their frailties, especially remembering that common report may be a liar, and that we have glass houses of our own with windows to break should they retaliate.

Let us be silent about their intellects, for not everyone is so great a fool as prejudiced folk imagine. This charge of silliness and folly is

far too common, and decency ought to forbid the utterance of it.

Let us be silent about their movements, which, after all, are their concern, not ours. Let them go in and out as they please, without our comments. If they choose to emigrate, what is that to us ? They may get up late, and stay out an unconscionable time ; let them. It is their responsibility ; not ours.

Let us be silent about our suspicions. It is very possible that they have not paid their baker's bill, that their rent is behind, and that they are living beyond their means. The ladies may dress too much, and the young men may be fast. But why should we imagine what we do not know, and have no means of finding out ? All may be utterly groundless. Therefore, silence is bound to be best, silence from talk, and from thinking too.

It is curious how things get round, and how the talk of the bed-chamber may echo into the streets. We never know how suspicions travel, nor how far they can go in the twinkling of an eye.

We may not consciously invent, but we may easily catch up and repeat others' inventions, and pass them on as facts. We must not do it. We must treat our neighbours as we wish to be treated ourselves.

Then it sometimes happens that we have others' secrets entrusted to us. Let us be silent about them. It is a breach of trust to break silence. We were told it under the strictest seal of secrecy. Then it would be criminal to divulge it. It may have been foolish to make

confidants of us in such delicate matters, but once let a reputation be placed in our hands, and it is our business to see that it does not suffer.

The tongue is so great a divider between man and man that a large dose of silence will do more to bridge over breaches and prevent collisions than anything else in the world. It is the one remedy the world needs, and until it comes the noise of battle will continue. For our own peace, and for the peace of our fellows, let us learn to be silent. It is the silence-keeper who is the world's best peacemaker.

Let silence reign *in the sphere of work.*

It is a busy world, there is much to be done in life, and to do our work well requires all our thoughts and energies. It is the narrowed, concentrated stream which best turns the mill wheel, and it is the engrossed worker who does his tasks best.

Now, nothing fritters away energy so much as talk, and there are few who can work with their hands and with their mouths at the same time. Silence is a wonderful adjunct to good work.

We are all acquainted with the man who is always going to begin, and somehow never gets any further. He is the man with wonderful plans who is going to achieve super-excellent results. But all ends in smoke, or rather, I should say, in words. He has used up all his strength in proclaiming the coming work, and has no energy left for doing it.

Sir Arthur Helps' Milverton hits off this frothy danger well :—

"I mostly avoid talking about what I am going to do; at least until it is in a state of forwardness. Talking prevents doing. Silence is the great fellow-workman."

This was Archbishop Temple's plan. It was said of him:—

"He did things without saying that he intended to do them."

Philip Armour, of Chicago fame, when once asked to say, in the fewest possible words, how he had accomplished so much, replied promptly, "By keeping my mouth shut."

You see, it is so much more easy to talk than to do, and if we can substitute words for deeds we are strongly tempted to do so. The foolish world fancies that it is quite as easy to get credit by talking about great exploits in the dim by-and-bye, as it is to go through the toil and bother of doing them.

The wise man, however, prefers the credit of the finished work, like Sir Christopher Wren, who bade men look round and see his monument in the completed cathedral.

Sedgemoor was lost to the Duke of Monmouth by a pistol shot fired prematurely. And words of mere intention are often the prelude of defeat in our spheres of work, because they consume the powder which was meant for the grimmer work to come.

Let us be silent, too, *about our secrets.*

There are some choice souls to whom you can pour out your heart's deepest confidences, but there are not many. Most men and women are leaky, because they are not strong enough to

keep either your secrets or their own. So, it behoves us to keep our secrets for the most part to ourselves.

"The secret of one is my secret," said one; "the secret of two is anybody's secret."

Our secrets are like birds in a cage; but once open the door, and whose birds are they?

"Can you keep a secret?" was once asked of a pertinacious person, who sought such a confidence.

"Yes," was the prompt reply.

"So can I," was the retort.

"There are many things which we have got to keep in our hearts, and not talk about," said Dr. Jowett. And indeed there are.

Innocent countrymen, coming to London, have had the confidence trick played on them to their grievous loss, entrusting their purse to another, just to show their trust.

Rochefoucauld asks:—"How can we expect that a friend should keep our secret, while we are convincing him that it is more than we can do ourselves?"

Sa'adi wrote a similar reflection:—

"It is safer to be silent than to reveal one's secret to anyone, and telling him not to mention it. O good man! Stop the waters at the fountain head, for when it is in full stream you cannot arrest it. You should never speak a word in secret which may not be related in every company."

No doubt, there is a charm in telling confidences, and it is hard to stop when you begin, but the charm is soon broken when the little

bird flies abroad, and approaches the general ear.

In stormy times we must be silent.

There are electric atmospheres which a single word will precipitate into a storm. That word withheld, and the storm will pass over. That word uttered, and the lightnings will begin to play disastrously.

It is the danger of the spoken word which makes it necessary for Alpine climbers to keep the strictest silence, lest the vibration of their voices should precipitate the threatening avalanche. Thus we read of Leslie Stephen that he was " grimly silent on a dangerous spot."

It was Monica's misfortune to have a husband given to intemperance, and, on being asked how she managed to keep him from knocking her about when in his cups, she answered :—

" Because I make it a point when he is drunk to keep silence."

Oh ! the virtue of the unspoken word, when the storm-spirit is about in the house, and evil passions are aroused. It is silence which drives the clouds away and locks up the evil thing. But let the incautious, provocative word emerge, and the home becomes a veritable hell.

One little word spoken, and the cages fly open for the whole menagerie of wild things to riot over the home and wreck it.

And, as with the home, so with the State. A word may start a war, and indeed has done it again and again. A bit of silent repression, the straining lips resolutely held, and the fair features of Peace will smile sweetly.

Madame Guyon used this remedy to advantage in her unbalanced home, where a mother-in-law, truculent and jealous, sought to poison her life. She tried hard to drive a wedge between the husband and the wife, and nothing but resolute silence on her daughter-in-law's part saved the situation. "Inwardly supported, I remained silent," she writes.

Let ignorance be silent.

Unfortunately, it is just the ignorant who speak the most, driven to it by knowing no better. There is no assurance like the assurance of ignorance. Is it not for this reason that young men and young women are often so voluble? Nobody is so sure, nobody is so wise, nobody is so contemptuous as the young, and so they talk, and talk interminably. And they cannot be put down.

All subjects are alike clear to them. Give them a lead, and they will prance off as long, and as far, as you like, or do not like. Will no one teach them the value and modesty of silence?

Sa'adi, that great instigator to silence, once wrote:—

"Nothing is so good for an ignorant man as silence; and if he were sensible of this he would not be ignorant."

Why should we run on the rocks of speech, when there is such deep water along the channels of silence?

Lord Randolph Churchill, when he was appointed Secretary of State for India, realizing his ignorance of the work of his Department, kept for long a wise and judicious silence.

"For some time," his biographer writes of him, "and until he mastered the methods of procedure, and the idiosyncracies of the individual members, he took no part whatever in the debates, but sat in his Presidential chair, absolutely silent."

Well would it be for us if we had the experience of that early monk Arsenius, who constantly heard a voice within, saying, "Be silent. Be quiet."

It seems, however, that he did not always obey the monitor, for he said of himself :—

"I have often been sorry for having spoken ; never for having been silent."

This was Ruskin's counsel :—

"The best thing you can do, even though you may be a well-educated person, is to be silent, and strive to be wiser every day."

Rouchfoucauld recommends us to stop when wisdom ends :—

"True eloquence consists in saying what is proper, and nothing more."

And so Carlyle :—

"Speak not, I passionately entreat thee, until the thought has silently matured itself. Hold thy tongue, until some meaning lies behind it."

"O Lord and Sovereign of my life," runs the prayer of Ephrem of Syria, in the Russian Liturgy, "take from me the spirit of idleness, love of power, and unprofitable speaking."

An Eastern story tells of a young man, who was accustomed to sit in the company of clever men in the deepest silence, listening hard, and saying nothing :—

"My son," said one, "why do you not also say something you know?"

"I fear," he replied, "lest they should question me about something of which I am ignorant, whereby I should suffer shame."

Let us be silent *on things too high.*

For there are matters too exalted for common talk, where free talk is soiling and desecrating.

Religion is a subject for action, rather than for idle speech. It is rare indeed that the religious talker is as ready with his living as he is with his talking. The bit of religion that some men possess, or seem to possess, so runs to waste through the lips, that none seems to be left for the life.

There are occasions, of course, when confession must be made, and convictions be told out. But the talking of religion for religion's sake is not a worthy use of speech. Silence is better.

Dr. Jowett once congratulated the great physician, Sir William Gull, on wearing the fur of his coat inside, and the reply given was this:—

"I wear my fur where I wear my religion, inside."

Akin to this story is that oft-told one of the politician when asked, "What is your religion?"

"The religion of all wise men."

"And what is that?"

"No wise man ever tells."

The controversialist is very apt to speak of things too high, and to speak unwisely. For there are some subjects which admit of two, and even of more, sides, with the likelihood that the truth lies amongst them all. Positive

minds are apt to foreclose every subject, and to deny any side but their own. And so they anathematise their opponents, and even deny them common honesty. There are few bloodless controversies. Such religious quibbling accomplishes nothing but to rub the bloom off a truth so roughly handled. Besides, it is apt to degenerate into a personal conflict for victory. So, unless truth is really at stake, silence is better than speech.

Silence on *things too low* is also wise.

To descend to the gutter for conversational matter is horrid, and yet human nature can fall as low as this. There are jokes and *bons mots* which derive all their point from their indelicacy. We are not intended to live in such moral sewers.

If decent men would get up silently, and leave the company who amuse themselves in this low fashion, it would be well.

But it would be better still if lips themselves would close, and refuse to let the evil stream flow forth.

Unfortunately, through the influence of plays and books, the matters often discussed are just these evil things, and so familiarity vitiates the taste, and lets the vile be accounted harmless.

Certainly, here is a necessary sphere for silence.

Silence *before superiority* is becoming.

Let the man who knows less be silent before the man who knows more, and let him listen for his mind's good. Conceit will find it hard, for it asks, " Who is superior to me ? " Still, the most ignorant of us must be aware when

a master is present; at least within a little. And if we are in doubt, let humility give the palm to the other. If we are still in doubt, it is better to watch the actions of others, and go by their estimate.

At a dinner given by the Duke of Wellington at Walmer Castle, Croker took the lead, as usual, in the conversation, and almost monopolised it. Suddenly, a voice broke in with a loud "Hush!" It was Rogers, the poet, who wished to stop the headlong torrent. All were naturally startled, and, for a time, there was dead silence. Rogers then explained himself:—

"I wanted to get a hearing for the Duke."

But no ordinary man is delicate enough, and lowly enough, to give place to another. Only the man who is tempered exactly, and is altruistically developed, can easily keep silence in order to hear another's voice.

We might expect a man like Jowett to say such a thing as this:—

"I always find myself struck dumb in the presence of a great man."

Not to be silent before such superior men is not only a sign of our own mismanagement, but is a proof that we cannot recognise a great man when we see him, which is one of the worst of all condemnations.

It is also a distinct fraud on the rest of the company, who have come together, probably, for the express purpose of hearing the wiser man. We may fancy that we are better worth the hearing than the other, but we stand alone in the notion.

Among the stories of Sa'adi, was one of a Persian Prime Minister, who, in the presence of some wise men, sat silent. Taxed with his dumbness, he was asked the reason of it.

"Ministers are like physicians," he said, "and, like physicians, give medicines to the sick only. Therefore, when I see your opinions are judicious, it would not be consistent with wisdom for me to obtrude my sentiments. When a matter can be managed without my interference, it is not proper for me to speak on the subject."

How often the proprieties are violated by the impudence of some crude, raw youth, who, before his mature betters, will obtrude his opinion with all the assurance of experience and years! And it is to be feared that the spirit is growing in these democratic days.

Silence *concerning things unnecessary* is to be commended.

How hot people get over trifles, as if they were matters of life and death! It is most mysterious that men cannot see the proportion of things better.

There is that mania for the last word, for instance, over which so much verbiage is spilt, to say nothing of hot tempers. Is it worth fighting for? Is the victor any the better for it? Why should he plume himself on a victory of pure littleness?

Let us remember that the last word is generally the inflammatory word; the point of explosion. Sir Arthur Helps wrote once of it:—

"The love of having the last word causes as

much mischief as all the tornadoes of the tropics."

So, too, are the trifling disputes of life, which are never worth the zeal expended on them, but are pure waste. Half the political verbal contests might well have been buried out of sight and mind, for all the good they do. The root of many of the Society quarrels, which rend it from top to bottom, are of such tiny proportions, that only interested people can see any gravity in them.

And so, all the world over, tittle-tattle goes on without intermission about mere nothings, and worse than nothings.

The point to be remembered is that men are not all interested in the same things, that what looms big to one is invisible to another, and that to talk about the uninteresting and the noxious is, from every point of view, offering wares in a glutted, or a bad, market.

Such are some of the spheres of silence, which the general sense of the community will certainly commend. I think we may say that these spheres cover not a little of life. It would be a clear gain if we could prune our speech to as great an extent as these. There is still much room for wise speech, and necessary speech, and useful speech. We are counselled only to speak up to the point of usefulness, and no further. To break these bounds who would recommend ?

CHAPTER VI.

SILENCE FALLACIES.

THERE is no subject around which fallacies may not gather to its detriment. Like barnacles which cling to the ship's bottom, these fallacies and misunderstandings are a distinct clog to right and proper movement. The only thing to be done is to scrape them off, however difficult the operation may be.

Silence is one of those subjects which lend themselves to such fallacies, and almost welcome them. They therefore require, and demand, careful attention. Of the many comments which silence provokes, we must not be surprised if many of them are wrong.

Unfortunately, some of these misapplications are not only wrong, but mischievous, jumping, as they often do, to noxious and injurious conclusions. It becomes all the more necessary to track them to their lair, and to despatch them without mercy.

The temptation with sufferers, unfortunately, is to break silence in self-defence, and to undo all the good of their reticence by premature justifications. Would it not be better to suffer unrighteously than to rush into the arena,

and choose some noisy battling? Silence must have its martyrs, like every other good cause. They are suffering for righteousness' sake.

We will now sample some of these fallacies, the more common of them, and point out the flaws in them which run, like a black vein, through the marble. Want of charity, of course, is the curse of all.

See, first, how these fallacies affect the character of men and women.

"*Silent from pride*" is the verdict in numberless cases of silence, and, being often said, comes at last to be believed as a certain fact.

"We are not good enough for him," men say bitterly. "He thinks we are too insignificant to waste his time and talents on us. His breath is far too precious."

And yet, in nine cases out of ten, pride is the last possible construction to be placed upon the silence, and the very falsest. It is far more likely to be timidity and fear which lie at the root of the man's silence, and lock his jaws.

For we are not all constructed on the same plan, and while to some the gift of ready speech is granted in profusion, with others reserve is deeply imbedded in their structure. It is their nature to be silent; that is all.

And the tragedy is that, all the while the accusation of pride is being levelled at him, the man himself would give much to be as ready of speech as his neighbours, and feels bitterly the padlock which keeps his lips closed.

So that the silence no more proceeds from

pride than the accusation from charity and knowledge.

This was the indictment which Goethe's silence in the Prussian capital brought upon him. He had accompanied his royal master, Duke Karl August, to Berlin, and found himself at table with several Generals :—

" But Goethe, who kept his eyes open, sternly kept his mouth closed."

" I have spoken no word," he wrote, " in the Prussian dominion, which ought not to be made public. Therefore I am called haughty, and so forth."

Sometimes, it is *temper* which is supposed to create the silence.

The culprit is so angry that he cannot find words with which to express himself, and is said to be " silent from passion."

Now, undoubtedly, the extremes of emotion, good and bad, and temper among them, do rob men of the powers of speech, and if we were to say that some men are inarticulate from passion, we should be speaking the truth. But to imagine it in particular cases, and to pass judgment, without any other evidence than suspicion, or because we ourselves are at times silent from such a cause, is neither good taste nor good charity.

It is highly probable that our presumably hot person is, as a matter of fact, just simply hurt and sad at some ill treatment, and keeps quiet in order not to make matters worse. It is more than probable, that, if he chose, he could pour out some blistering words, and express himself

only too readily. And it is a work of grace to hold back the hidden fires.

Such an accusation is only another instance of the way which unkind people have of taking things up by the wrong handle, and giving a bad twist to a really straight and innocent thing.

Neither is silence always or mostly of *crafty depth.*

To the malevolent mind the silent are often conspirators, with dark lantern under their cloaks, who move about noiselessly and silently to achieve their horrid purposes the more readily and securely. They are regarded as for ever revolving in their unscrupulous minds some deadly scheme which is to do untold mischief.

It is curious how a certain type of mind runs to such suspicions as these. They live their lives in fear of conspiracies.

Now, suspicion is not the nicest of atmospheres to live and move in, and we do ourselves no good by imagining dark things which, as likely as not, have no existence.

Perhaps the silent are men of depth, but the depth may be clear depth, and not muddy at all. And it is just as likely, too, that their silence may be the silence of shallowness and vacuity.

Coleridge tells a story, which will illustrate this tendency of suspecting the silent. He had a good neighbour, with whom he was on intimate terms, but who had strong prejudices against silent people. On the other side was a neighbour who said much less than the garrulous

Coleridge. And this was his verdict on the two:—

"As for Coleridge, there is not much harm in him, for he is a whirl-brain that talks of whatever comes uppermost. But that ———, he is a dark traitor. You never hear him say a syllable on the subject."

A common fallacy is the notion that the silent are necessarily *unsociable.*

No doubt, they are with some, and, probably, our accusing friend is one of the few whom he really does avoid, feeling that the less he knows and companies with him, the better. We are all unsociable in some company, and we do well to be. And if we know, as we mostly do, with whom it is unsafe to speak freely, we should be fools to let ourselves go. So the accusation comes to this, that our friend is really giving his own, and, probably, his deserved, experience. The general turn he gives to the insinuation comes from ill-nature.

At the same time, I am not denying that there are such unsociable people, whose nature is unsociable, and who are unsociable to all. But these are few and far between, and, it is not the mark of our race, which is decidedly gregarious and not solitary.

In most cases where the accusation is made, the culprits, if followed to their homes, or to more congenial society, would be found to spread out and blossom like a flower in the atmosphere it likes. But frost, human or climatic, will shut up the best of flowers.

That *silence is guilt* is a common charge, and

is mostly untrue. Perhaps no more mischievous and noxious accusation is ever made against quite innocent people.

Who does not know how, under the shock of some grave charge, the tongue becomes paralysed and the brain refuses to act? It is all so startling, so horrible, so unthinkable. And if, under the stress the face pales or reddens, and silence reigns, are we to jump to the conclusion that it means confession of guilt? How can we?

The fact is that oftentimes the charge follows suspicion, and the verdict being already given, we clutch at anything and everything which seems to chime in with our judgment. And so we twist the silence in our direction. And, constantly, we discover that, when a wrong is done, some victim must be found, and, almost unconsciously, we grasp at the first possible one that comes along. We hate to be baffled, and we hate to be put in the wrong.

Montaigne, in his Essay on Vanity, gives us an instance of the falsity of this popular notion, and of the tragedy of it.

"I never read the following story," he writes, "that I am not offended at it, with a natural resentment. Lyncastes, being accused of conspiracy against Alexander, the day before that he was brought out before the army, according to the custom, to be heard what he could say for himself, had prepared a studied speech, of which, haggling and stammering, he pronounced some words. But still being more perplexed, while struggling with his memory, and that he

was recollecting himself of what he had to say, the soldiers nearest him charged their pikes against him and killed him, looking upon him as a culprit convict. His astonishment and silence served them for a confession, for, having so much leisure to prepare himself in prison, they concluded that it was not his memory that failed him, but that his conscience tied up his tongue and stopped his mouth."

Let us beware lest we build a charge upon such an ambiguous thing as silence, if we would hold the scales of justice fairly, remembering, that while silence may be guilty, it is just as likely that volubility is guilty too.

Then what shall we say to the notion that silence is a *sign of weakness?* For this is often said too.

One would have thought that silence spoke rather of strength than weakness, remembering how easy it is to talk, and how difficult to keep silent. But accusers do not consult probabilities so much as prejudices. They let their minds and tongues jump the way they want to go.

Thus, some quiet dogs have earned the character for lack of spirit and courage, until the silence has been suddenly broken by an onslaught, which showed that the cowardice was rather on the other side, to judge by the rapid flight of the other dogs, and their howls of dismay and fear.

The danger is lest those who have such an opinion of some silent people may take liberties, and presume on what really does not exist.

Washington Irving, in his story of the

Conquest of Granada, gives an illustration of this foolish conception that silence necessarily implies weakness. When Malaga was being besieged, Queen Isabella paid a visit to the camp, to see how the siege was progressing, and to gaze on the uncaptured walls. She issued an order that the firing should be suspended for a while, and that fresh offers of peace should be made to the Moors.

The Moors immediately jumped to the conclusion that the strange and unexpected silence meant a collapse of the siege, and, thinking that the powder was exhausted, refused to parley with the Spaniards, or, as they thought, play into the hands of their now silenced enemy. They soon discovered their error, for shot and shell rained upon the devoted city, carrying havoc in their train. Then they knew that it was not the weakness of the enemy which for a while silenced their guns.

The long silence of a fuse may mean that it has gone out, but no sensible man, who cares for life, would jump too quickly to that conclusion, or approach too near, on the strength of the notion that the silence meant impunity and safety.

Neither does silence necessarily mean *indifference*, though it is sometimes thought to involve a want of concern and interest, and to imply a sluggish pulse.

The charge springs, I think, from judging others by ourselves. We think that what may be true of ourselves must be true of others.

But men cannot all alike gush over trifles,

and wear their hearts upon their sleeves. If some enthusiastic natures ripple over at a word, it does not follow that their inner feelings are any the more deeply stirred. They are just made that way. Paper burns more quickly than an oak log, but it does not last so long, or give out so satisfactory a heat. A Scotchman will be unmoved when an Irishman is shouting at his top note. It is just a difference of temperament and depth. But to call such silence indifference is to play with words and with facts. Lowell once wrote :—

"That friendship should be able to admire silence without suspicion is the surest touchstone of its sufficiency."

"Still waters run deep," we do well to remember. Underneath a Stoic exterior hot fires often burn, and those who have stood by when the mask dropped well know how an icy silence may easily cover the pent up lava of the heart.

Besides, we do not all leap quickly to a conclusion. We ruminate, and ponder, and wait, until the doubt is gone, and then we leap fast enough, and probably leap the further for our honest and deliberate waiting.

It is difficult to come to an end of these accusations against the character of the silent. But there is one other which demands mention ; that silent people are so *because they are supercilious ;* that they do not speak because they think the more, and what they think is contemptuous.

Bishop Burnet knew the English hatred of anything approaching the spirit of contemptuous

criticism when he blamed King William to a correspondent for his unwise silence, lest "his silent ways should pass for superciliousness."

Naturally, if the silence in question is the product of a fancied superiority, and because its disdain is too violent for words, we share in the spirit of indignation. But is it?

May it not be a bit of pure imagination on our part, a reflection of what we should feel? Did you really see the eyebrows rise and fall amidst the silence?

In truth, it is hard to judge spoken words and to take everything into account, and we have found our judgments so often wrong in the face of what seemed certainty, that most of us are tempted to think twice and thrice before we announce our impressions. But, if it be difficult to be accurate about what is spoken, how much more difficult it must be to ascertain the inner springs of silence! It is better, is it not? to let sweet charity come and throw her bright mantle over the suspicions of our minds, and certainly never to give voice to them.

But why add to the list of baseless insinuations on silent men? Every day will reveal some new forms of uncharitableness to those who mingle with their fellows. It is an unkind world, with a warped nature, which finds it easier to take things up by the wrong than by the right handle.

It will do us good to hear the confessions of silent men themselves, or their friends, and so discover how wrong the world is in its judgments.

"How curious that difficulty of talking to others," once wrote Dr. Jowett. "I feel it constantly. It is partly a kind of sensitiveness, or a fear of not meeting with a response."

It was said of Jowett:—

"Often, no doubt, he was too weary to talk well, and preferred not to talk at all. And now and then he may have been intentionally silent, in order to draw out his companions; but, in a great measure, his silence was due to a natural shyness, which he never shook off."

An old pupil thus writes of him:—

"A disciple of Socrates, he valued speech more highly than any other gift, yet he was always hampered by a conscious imperfection in sustaining and developing his thoughts in society."

And Jowett wrote of himself, giving a reason for his much regretted silence:—

"I have a good deal of personal experience of a sort of inanity of mind (absolutely nothing there) and not a fact accurately remembered, or a word to say to anybody."

Here are reasons quite sufficient for the silence of others, any one of which is infinitely superior to the ungracious and uncharitable ones we have been considering and condemning.

Or take Hamerton's silence, which, no doubt, was often wrongly attacked:—

"He was reserved in conversation because of his general weakness in those intellectual faculties which express themselves in words."

Well worth recalling, too, are the explanations of Carlyle's silences, when most grateful men would have spoken:—

"He was the gratefullest of men, but, from a strong reluctance to speak of his feelings, he left his gratitude unuttered. He seemed to take whatever was done for him as a matter of course. It was only in his letters that he showed what was really in his heart."

I have dwelt at length on the attacks made on silent men's characters on account of their silence. It is time that we turned our thoughts to the common *reflection upon their intelligence.*

Is a man necessarily a fool because he holds his tongue? It seems to me, and to most, that the man who knows when to be silent has quite his fair share of wit, to say the least. Fools are more likely to chatter than to be silent. And yet the fallacy is common, as we all know.

"The dear fellow says so little, because he has so little to say," remarked Sydney Smith, of all men in the world. "It is not will, but his mind, that is at fault."

Carlyle struck a truer and fairer note when he wrote:—

"Silent, not from having nothing to say, but from having all—a whole world—to say at once."

And, truly, if the neck of the bottle be narrow, however full it may be, the fluid is bound to halt in its exit.

Dr. Johnson was not an unlikely man to see stupidity in silence, being so given to over-speech himself. And so we are not surprised to hear of his impatience with a man who had travelled largely, and yet maintained a somewhat strained silence.

"Surely," said he, "the man who has seen

Prague might tell us something new, and something strange, and not sit silent for want of matter to put his lips in motion."

Probably, our traveller might have spoken, if Johnson had given him a chance; and it is highly possible that fear of Johnson's bludgeon blows might have something to do with his silence. He was not a comfortable man to talk to. The simple fact is that a wise man, who is also modest, and perhaps a little self-conscious and nervous, thinks before he speaks, and sometimes thinks too long to speak at all. In picked company, chosen for their sympathy, even such men as they break the ice, because they are sure of the rest, and feel at home.

They have the same cautious feeling as the undergraduate, who, going for a walk with a plain-spoken professor, "always went with his head down in silence." For the learned man "played the Socrates to him, and he did not like it, lying in wait for you to say something foolish, so that he could snap you up."

Walter Pater depicts the Master of Balliol and the undergraduate, walking along in silence:—"Neither of them would say a word; the young man being deterred by bashfulness; the older man by having no butt at which to discharge his wit."

And, to judge by the fate of one unfortunate man, silence was the better course by far; for having summoned enough courage to say that it was a fine day, he was promptly snapped up with the cutting reply:—

"It is a mistake to make meaningless remarks just for the sake of saying something. Better be silent than cause yourself to appear foolish before your companion."

Was Bishop Butler a foolish man when he took little, or no, part in the proceedings of the House of Lords? But Horace Walpole once taunted him for his silence, on the occasion of the debate on the Regency Bill:—

"The Bishop of Durham," he said, "has been wafted to that See in a cloud of metaphysics, and remained absorbed in it."

But Walpole forgot that the Bishop had once written a sermon on The Government of the Tongue, and would not be unlikely to live up to it. More than probably, Butler was a much wiser man in his silence than Walpole in his speech.

There is one common fallacy, which has done ill service to humanity; the fallacy that "*Silence gives consent.*"

It is easy to see how such a saying was coined, for it is just an effort to snatch a victory in some silent interval; to give a favourable turn to what really hangs in suspense. And it is certain that many a triumph has thus been stolen by some bold spirit, who tampered with the scales.

Once upon a time the opposite was quoted, as equally decisive. It was at that period of Greek history, when Aristides and Themistocles so often clashed in conflict. At a council of war, held in Athens, Themistocles was sketching a plan, by which the Persians might be trapped and defeated. Aristides remained silent. Upon

this Cleotricus, hoping to score for his side, cried out :—

"Your advice is not agreeable to Aristides, since he is here present, and says nothing."

"You are mistaken," replied Aristides, "for I should not have been silent, had not the counsel of Themistocles been the most eligible. And now I hold my peace, not out of regard to the man, but because I approve of his sentiments."

There is no doubt that in public meetings silence may have any interpretation you like to put upon it. It may be a silence of doubt and suspense, or a silence of terror, or a silence of apprehension at the very thought of getting upon one's feet to speak, or the silence of policy, through not wishing to take sides, or the silence of mental confusion. Silence may give consent, but you cannot gather it certainly from the silence.

Sydney Smith once said that a great deal of wisdom was lost to the world for want of a little courage. And the shrinking which lets bad measures pass, rather than break speech, has done exceeding harm in life. Such silence reduces us to nonentities, and worse.

Our English History gives us one notable instance of this injustice through want of courage.

Sir Robert Paston, in the year 1664, proposed in the House of Commons that a grant of two and a half millions should be made to the King, extending over three years. "The House was astounded at the hugeness of the sum. They sat in amazement." Then one bold member

proposed a smaller sum. But no one had the courage to second the proposal.

When the Speaker put the question to the House, the affirmatives were so loud, and the negatives so silent, that it became law.

"But it was notorious," writes Clarendon, "very many sat silent."

Judgment by default is simply judgment by silence, and if the silent ones had but spoken, they might have had a good deal to say to the contrary.

Fallacies have a trick of taking different sides, and saying the same thing to diametrically opposite people. And so we find that while one fallacy makes the silent supremely foolish, another makes them *preternaturally wise.* But this is no more necessarily true than the other. Silence may be the modest covering for bursting fulness of intelligence, or it may be the decent covering for mental nakedness.

Silence is sometimes said to "set up for being wise," and to exist for the purpose of concealing its lack of wisdom. And in this it is wiser than it knows, for why should folly be ever exposing itself? He is foolish indeed who, knowing that his mental cupboard is empty, insists on throwing open the doors. But, depend upon it, if wisdom be not there, it is not possible for long to hide the fact of its absence.

Coleridge tells us of a woeful disappointment which came to him. He had, for his fellow diner at a restaurant, a man with all the points of a philosopher; the noble brow, the able cast

of countenance, and the silence. Nothing that he could say could draw him to an utterance. But the dumplings did it. For when they appeared, his eyes glistened, and he broke cover with the words, "Them's the jockeys for me."

After all, wisdom is not so poverty-stricken that it limits itself to but one mode of expression. It is wise, because it knows how best to reveal itself, whether in speech, or silence, or action. Silence may be its prevailing mode, but it is by no means its only one. It chooses according to the need.

And what is the upshot of all this? Surely, that the less we pass judgment on others, the better, and the more we see how untrue most of our past judgments have been, also the better. A little more honest thought and recollection, and fallacies would be impossible, because we should criticise no more in doubtful regions.

Where there are so many good reasons for silence, why seek dubious and unkind ones? There are times when there comes over us a craving for quiet, and silence is then our only language.

Bishop Creighton, so his widow tells us, preferred to go abroad where he was not known, need not talk, and could be at peace. His long silence during days spent in mountain walks showed the need he felt for times of thought and withdrawals into himself.

To attack silence, which may have its roots in weariness, or sorrow, or sickness, is not only unkind, but needless and cruel.

CHAPTER VII.

GRIM SILENCE.

IN classifying the many modes which silence assumes, it is difficult to place them so naturally and scientifically that they shall not overlap somewhere. Even in an egg you may sometimes find a double yoke. But, although highly irregular, we do not gather from this that the law of the single yoke is broken. So I think that in our chapters on silence, even though we may find one division overlapping another, we may be permitted to pass it as the exception that proves the rule. To over-refine is quite possible when we are making a whole book on a single subject, but in this imperfect world we may be permitted to take liberties so long as we do not take too many of them.

Now, the type of silence which I have ventured to call "grim," might conceivably be called something else, and be classified under some other name. Still, it conveys the meaning I have in my own mind, and conveys it better than any other to myself. Perhaps, by the time I have had my say on the subject, the reader will be in agreement with me. I hope so.

Amongst grim silences, let me put first the *silences of nature ;* at least some of them.

For one, the silence of winter, when King Frost has gripped the world, and is holding it fast and still, as if throttled. No longer do we hear the pleasant ripple of the brook ; its song is hushed, as its form is changed and hardened. And, by and bye, the silent snow falls flake by flake, Nature's best illustration of movement without noise. As we see the forms of men and women passing by, we see but hear not, for the ground's mantle of white absorbs the accustomed clatter. Silently the great wains move, and the big hoofs fall noiselessly, and, while the eye is filled, the ear is useless. The birds sing no songs, for they have heard a voice that bids them be still in sympathy with the white and silent world. And if, now and then, a branch snaps under the pressure of the gathered snow, or there sounds out the thud of some small avalanche, the broken silence only helps to accentuate the silence which prevails. At such a time we feel as if the Great Master of nature and of man had sent forth His fiat that all noise should for a while be hushed, and that the world should have a holiday from its usual sounds for a season.

A grim silence, too, is the *silence before a storm*, when nature sends forth its warning to all and sundry to take good heed and seek the shelter that is nearest. Well do we know the stillness, and almost fear it.

Not a breath of air is stirring ; the leaves

cease to rustle and to twirl; the chorus of the bird world and the beast world is hushed. The live air dies and, hot and sultry, seems to tell us that great nature is stoking its fires. The leaden clouds roll sulkily up, and gather inkiness as they crowd to the point of meeting. The deep silence is positively painful in its emphasis. Even humanity feels the strong compulsion, and stays its words, or speaks with bated whispers, apologetically, and with effort. And when, at last, the leashes of nature's powers are let loose, there springs forth the deadly uproar of an apparently revolting heaven. The winds lash out, the thunders roar and rumble, and we seem wrapped around with flame and tumult. Then we know what the silence meant.

To those upon the great waters, the silence is more ominous still.

For a storm at sea is something alone; no land storm can be compared to it. There is the same heavy atmosphere, in which we feel it hard to breathe freely. But then there are the smooth waters, which slowly rise and fall, as if oil had mingled with them. Over all is the blue black heaven, which almost touches the ship's masts, so low and solid does it appear. A nameless dread is diffused over the hearts of passengers and crew, as they await the inevitable onslaught. All has been made taut, and no chances are being taken, for who knows what will happen when the storm fiend begins his work? Man feels very small when in the grasp of a mighty storm at sea. It is then

that he feels glad that there is a God who "rides upon the storm."

Grim too are the silences of *great spaces.*

Travellers tell us of the silent desert, aching in its solitudes, where day by day upon the soft sands the silent feet tread their weary way towards civilisation and society. And when, here and there along the silent highways, are found, bleached and still, the bones of the starved, and lost, and overtaken, the painful silence is deepened.

So in the great Arctic and Antarctic wastes, where brave men press their adventurous way, and tread a path that perhaps no mortal feet have trod before, or come upon the traces of perished pioneers who have passed into the silent land, leaving only some brave message to tell what heroes they were, the silence reigns supreme and tragic.

And in the heavens overhead is the deepest silence of all, starry worlds in their myriads, but all in silent splendour. Now and then some asteroid splinters, and, striking our atmosphere, bursts into flame and dust.

Grim indeed are these silences, and if men almost faint under their greatness, we cannot wonder, for they are such vastnesses and immensities as stagger the imagination.

Almost more grim are the silences before some great *human catastrophe*, where man is the moving element, and upon man comes the terrible loss. Nature may terrify, but there is no passion, and if death falls, it is but accident and misfortune. But when men go forth on their dreadful

errands, to deal out death and destruction, the tragedy is unspeakable in its grimness.

The silence before a battle is one such instance. Back in the past has been the preparation, noisy enough, as the hammers rang, and the fires blazed. Noisy, too, the march of troops, and the rumble of waggons and artillery. Noisy, also, the shouting of the men, as they hail the chance and excitement of battle and spoil. But the night before the battle there comes a change which silence most fittingly expresses. Then they begin to realise what mighty forces they are letting loose, and cannot forget that the hail of shot and shell will find a lodgment in many a poor mortal frame. It almost seems as if they dreaded the clash of conflict, and shrank from the possibility of hurling opponents into eternity, or of being so hurled themselves. They feel as men who are going to enter some actively burning crater, which promises to belch forth a rain of ashes and fire. Many thoughts shape themselves in that silence, unwontedly shape themselves, too, with many; thoughts of what the immediate future has in store for them; thoughts of the dear ones at home, and the news which may have to be flashed to them ere long; silent thoughts of prayer, that, in the great event which is at hand, they may have an assured future in a home "not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens."

And as on land, so the more on sea, as the great battle-ships enter into grim conflict. Thomas Campbell voiced this silent moment of

apprehension when he wrote his familiar ballad of the Battle of the Baltic :—

"Like Leviathans afloat, lay their bulwarks on the brine,
While the sign of battle flew on the lofty British line:
It was ten of April morn by the chime.
As they drifted on their path, there was silence deep as death,
And the boldest held their breath for a time."

Men cannot stand on the brink of death and babble. When their eternal fate hangs in suspense, and in a bare five minutes the rending shot may strike, it is nature, not cowardice, which makes them catch their breath, and subside into deepest silence. With the dark wings of death flapping over them, it is a natural instinct to be still and silent.

In a smaller way, and on a smaller field, are the silences before more *personal struggles*, and possible catastrophes.

Thus how impressive is the silence of a sick room, where man or woman is fighting death! Noise is danger at such a time, and in silence must the battle be fought, if the issue is to be the desired one. Nurses walk silently in noiseless slippers. All the house is kept rigidly still. The children are away, being cared for by friendly neighbours. Outside, the traffic is deadened artificially. The very knocker is wrapped in woollen cloth. The bells in the adjoining tower are not rung "by request." And all this silence in the interest of a life which noise may kill.

Terribly impressive, too, is the suspense when a life hangs in the balance in a Court of Justice, in some trial for murder. As the Jury file out

to consider their verdict there is noise enough, for the summing up has given more than a little opportunity for chatter. But all is changed when they return, and the Judge resumes his place, and demands the verdict. Now, the silence is death-like. Not a foot shuffles; not a cough is heard; all is still. Then upon the stillness falls the fateful word, "Guilty" or "Not Guilty." We can understand the silence, for every man for the moment sees himself in the dock, and listens as for his own fate. And we can understand the after-chatter, for the suspense is over, and the best, or the worst, is known.

And if silence be the natural expression of suspense, so is it the proper medium when the worst has happened, and death has come.

When the soul is passing, we stand by in solemn stillness, for a king is there, before whom all kings must tremble. Before the majesty of death we cannot speak for very decency. And, moreover, we may not disturb the dying one, but let him pass in peace, if it may be so. Better to fall upon our knees in silent entreaty that He Who has led many a soul across the dark river will pilot this one safely over to the eternal shore.

When death has come and gone, silence stays on, for we are in the house of death, and silence then is fitting and gracious for the sake of those who are left. So we still go silently about, and speak with low voices, or try not to speak at all. And silence must reign until the poor body is laid to rest among

the community of the dead yonder. Even outsiders, who come to do the last offices, catch the infection of silence, and, considering all noise an outrage, speak in low tones and in monosyllables.

And to the end, in that last sad procession, silence continues. The mutes, it is true, have vanished, but their descendants have caught their silence. The only voice that seems befitting then is the voice of prayer, when the minister of God breaks silence, to soothe the weary hearts of those who mourn, and to call down the blessing which alone can heal the broken spirit.

Not even here, however, does silence end, for after the funeral another silence ushers itself in, the silence of desolation and loneliness. We may not forget that many a life has to be lived afterwards in the grimmest of silences, and, with some, the longest of all, lasting to life's end. With the nearest and the dearest gone, and perhaps nobody left, drear indeed is the prospect. No one sits in the chair on the other side of the fireplace; there is no one to take the place of the one who used to sit at the table, as there is no one who can occupy the pedestal of the much beloved. We pity those upon whom the blow falls, and forget that the sorrow is only beginning at the graveside, and that it thrusts itself into the whole of some lives like a dismal wedge. It is as if the picture had been taken out of its frame, and they are condemned, during the weary years, to gaze only at the empty frame.

Among the grim silences of life, we must place the *silence of discord* as not the least tragic.

Here we see embosomed in the very family and home a silence which, whether it be long or short, is, while it lasts, sufficiently terrible and blameworthy. In the wide world we may be silent, and not reap a harvest of bitterness, but in the home, the silent ones are coming into constant contact, meeting on the stairs, sitting at the same table, quite unable to escape from each other's objectionable presence.

The acutest suffering comes when, as often happens, the bitter silence has sprung out of the bosom of love, because it is felt that love has been outraged, and therefore this protest has been made. As a matter of fact, love is still there at the bottom; only suffocated for a while by resentment and anger.

This was the too frequent tragedy of Carlyle's life, and the life of his vivacious, but perhaps a little provocative, wife. They were both probably "hard to live with," and exceedingly hard to manage, and each spoke out their inner thoughts without disguise. It was said of them that they had more admiration than tenderness for one another. He was terribly exacting, and she was, it may be, somewhat unyielding. Wondrously endowed with many excellent gifts, they somehow contributed the wrong element to the family blend. With him, the storms blew quickly over; with her, they slumbered long without really sleeping. And so, the mischief once afoot, it was hard to allay.

Froude narrates one of these many quarrels,

and its difficult adjustment. She remained at home; he went to his mother in Scotland. He wrote; she kept grimly silent.

"What am I to make of this continued silence?" he wrote. "It surely is not fair. Write to me as briefly as you like, but write. There can be no propriety in punishing me by such feelings as these are. It is like seething a kid in its mother's milk."

But never a word of reply.

"My mother asks, 'No word from Jeannie yet?' and, in spite of her astonishment, I am obliged to answer, 'None.'"

No uncommon spectacle this in this unreformed world of ours. There are few homes where this is not repeated, at more or less irregular intervals, the life through. Nobody cares to speak the first word. Pride, up in arms against injury and slight, takes steady refuge in silence. It is thought to be all judicial and disciplinary. But often it is vindictive. And men and women little realize that it is ill to sport with a thunder-cloud, ill to set whirling a water-spout. A breath from a charnel-house wraps such silence round. It is grim almost to savagery.

And what happens in the home, happens, of course, in Society, in the great outer world, and this voiceless horror works its pernicious way in all public places. Friends break with friends, and pass one another in the streets as strangers and foes. And now and then all Society agrees to a silent ostracism of one or other, ignoring them, and sending them to Coventry.

In the old days when light was dimmer, and the powers of the dominant Church were greater, she plunged whole communities into this dismal silence by her excommunications or her interdicts of death. To-day we are quite unconcerned at the fulminations of a tyrranous priesthood. But it was not so when men's salvation was supposed to depend on a priestly benediction.

Very grim, too, is the silence of *misunderstanding*. It need not be, it ought not to be, and, but for the cross purposes of life, would never have been. But, although so groundless and mistaken, it corrodes and blisters, as if truth lay at its roots.

The tragical feature of such silence is that one word of explanation might disperse all the clouds of suspicion which generated it. Yet that word remains unspoken, for pride locks the lips. And the longer the gap remains open, the wider it becomes, because there is no one willing to close it, or to take means to heal the breach. So husband and wife fall asunder, father and child, brother and sister, friend and friend; victims all of the unspoken word.

There are *physical silences*, too, which are grim enough in all conscience, touching, as they do, some of the saddest of earth's maladies.

We think of the great dumb world with its untold thousands shut out from easy communion with their fellows; their minds full, we may suppose, of deep, wise thoughts which, for want of the power of expression, are locked up in dead silence. No doubt, there are many

compensations, and we do well to remember how the dumb are saved from much foolish, indiscreet, and wicked speech.

Perhaps more painful far is the condition of him who, having had the power of speech, loses it from some sudden seizure, for he knows what he has lost. Perhaps he has been an orator, able to sway the masses by the witchery of his words, and to be reduced to mutterings and inarticulate moans must be positive agony. All that made him the man he was is, at one fell swoop, gone.

It was told of David Garrick, that consummate actor, that during his last days an old friend called to see him, and being invited by Mrs. Garrick to stay to dinner, he did. In the midst of their conversation Garrick himself came slowly in, with a face as yellow as a guinea, and wrapped in a gorgeous dressing gown. Sitting down in his own chair, he remained a whole hour in silence, never speaking a word.

But grim as is this enforced silence, grimmer still is that silence when the mind has been smitten.

Such was the lamentable end of Jonathan Swift, the great Dean of St. Patrick. He had predicted that he would die from the top downwards, like a smitten tree, and so he did. For a whole year before his death a great silence fell upon him, and he turned from the faces of men in utter desolation. For ten hours a day he paced his room. In solitude he ate and drank. When he sat down he resisted being dislodged. But it was noticed of him

that "he never talked nonsense, or said a foolish word" when he did speak. Nobody ever knew what went on behind the veil of silence, for he told no one. When he died, they buried him at midnight, with the silent stars for torches, for such had been his wish.

Less grim, but exceedingly embarassing and inconvenient, is the silence of a lapsed memory. It may be amusing to the public, but only to those foolish people who lack the keenness of sympathy. I am thinking of the failure of some speaker, subdued to a dead and humiliating silence by the flight of his best, and, perhaps, his only, idea. History records not a few of these grim silences, and perhaps we can each recall a few instances ourselves.

Nathaniel Hawthorne thus chronicles one of his lapses into silence. He had risen one day to make, what was intended to be, an impressive speech; but nothing came. "I tapped upon my mind," he said, "but it sounded hollow. It was quite empty. There was nothing in it whatever."

Preachers have suffered much from these grim silences, due to vanished ideas. Lacking the art, and the self-possession, to tide over the vacant interval, they have stopped dead in confusion, and thus revealed the empty cupboard.

One more ingenious sufferer announced suddenly that a member of the congregation, in great distress, asked their prayers, and, during the interval, his vanished thoughts came back to his relieved mind.

St. Francis of Assisi failed thus on one momentous occasion, when he would fain have remembered best of all. It was when he appeared before Pope Innocent III, to plead the cause of his Order.

The Pope sat on his throne, and St. Francis was permitted to make good his case before that mighty potentate. It had not been easy to secure the interview, and, should he fail, there was not any likelihood of his obtaining another. It was a case of now or never.

Great were the throes of preparation, as the Saint composed with highest skill the best of cases. Committing it all to memory, he launched forth. But, alas! at the sight of that august audience, every trace of his discourse vanished from his memory, and left him in utter confusion, and, as it seemed, in hopeless silence.

But St. Francis was a man of mettle, and, although he had lost his ideas, he kept his presence of mind. "A pause, a mental prayer, and then, abandoning himself to the natural current of his own ardent emotions, he poured forth his soul in an address so full of warmth and energy as to extort from the Pope and the whole College the exclamation that 'it was not he that spoke but the Divinity that spoke in him.'"

Justice has also its silent side, which we may call grim.

How often the criminal, hiding his crime, and, as he thinks, concealing it cleverly, is yet, for all his astuteness, his doublings and his dust-

throwing, followed to his hiding place, and, to his surprise, arrested. It may not be for years that the crime is brought home to him, but all the time justice, shod with wool, has been stealing upon the criminal all unawares. No doubt, there are miscarriages in justice, and equally true it is that some crimes are never brought home on this side of life, but justice in its quiet, patient way is not always thwarted. We think of the painstaking men who keenly follow clues, measure finger-prints, and piece together apparent contradictions, and, at last, sally quietly and silently out to arrest.

The silent *concealments* of life are often grim to a tragedy.

Conspirators must necessarily be silent men, if their schemes are to succeed, and long must be the preparation before some great burst of bomb or fire which is to stagger humanity. The fact that under the calm flow of life men are deliberating and planning such dreadful deeds is disquieting indeed, for the silence which seems peaceful and calm may, after all, be only the silence before the storm, grim even unto death.

There are concealments of personal ailments, which are all the more grim from the fact that, curable in their beginnings, they have been allowed to get beyond that hopeful stage, and drift into the region of the hopeless. From a false delicacy, or from a real heroism, anxious to spare some dear one pain, the silence has been fatally maintained to the deadly end.

Thus was it with Queen Caroline, who, from

fear of publicity, or from foolish personal pride, concealed her disease, and held on to the last in her concealment. It cost her infinite agony to hide it, and her torture hurried on the climax. Even when she succumbed, and took to her bed, for eleven days she struggled with death, haunted all the time by the fear that her secret might be discovered. When all was known, "she turned her face to the wall, and shed tears; the only tears she shed for herself."

And, as if to provide a most vivid contrast, the King "half crazy with sorrow and love, and in a kind of panic, talked without intermission of her, and of himself. He tortured her to eat, he scolded her for not lying still, and kept babbling away until the end."

The grim silence of *fearful anticipation* is one to be recorded also among the list of tragic, or semi-tragic, silences.

We are on the high seas, and go to sleep to the rhythmic throbbing of the steamer engines. In the middle of the night, we are suddenly awakened by the arrest of the pulsation. The engines have stopped. Those who have experienced this, as I have, need not be told how, in the dead silence which prevails, the heart leaps into the mouth with a fearful anticipation.

There may be something wrong, or there may not; but the feeling of the moment is that peril is on foot from some quarter. I well remember on one such occasion the rush of passengers to the deck with the enquiry, "What is it?" It happened to be a passenger

overboard, but it might conceivably have been worse even than that sad tragedy to one.

A door is locked in the late morning, and no knocking can make an impression on the inmate. Then comes the fear that something may be wrong, and the fear grows fast until the door is burst open, and the reason discovered. It may be death or paralysis, but it is enough to make the silence a grim and tragic one.

A nurse is watching beside a sick friend, or relation, and suddenly, as the night wears on, the breathing stops. In a moment she is bending down to listen, her heart full of anxious dread lest the silence should mean death. This is the silence of apprehension in one of its acutest forms.

And all through life where silence reigns, and our minds are strung to an acute pitch, the heart is apt to leap with a fear which distresses not a little, even if unfounded. Certainly, we are living in so uncertain a world, and such strange things may so easily happen, that we may not be unduly blamed even if we are wrong in our fears. At the same time, seeing that apprehensions are mostly groundless, it may be as well to restrain ourselves from yielding too readily to panic. A strong dash of optimism is a valuable ingredient in our natures.

Among the silences of terror we must not overlook the place it assumed in the history of Venice, whose whole judicial method was wrapped in mystery. The Council of the Ten, though in the background, thrust its tentacles

into the whole life of the nation, felt out the dangers which surrounded them, and, at the auspicious moment, silently struck.

There was no noise of judicial enquiry. No newspaper chronicled the rise and fall of conspiracies. The life of the nation moved on in apparent peacefulness, until one day in the great Square of St. Mark the bodies of the traitors swung in the wind on the gallows, or were fished up from the bottom of the Grand Canal.

Such was the end of the conspiracy of 1618, when Spain, with the help of some of her grandees officially settled in Italy, sought by one fell swoop to assassinate Doge, nobles and senators. Then would come pillage and fire, and Venice would cease to disturb the rest of Spain. But the Council held in its subtle hands all the secrets of these desperate men, and, at the right moment, extinguished the whole bloody scheme in their blood.

The general public knew not what had happened; they only saw the bodies of the conspirators hanging in the Square. And never a word did the Council speak of the matter. Without explanation the whole business was done, and justice satisfied. Even the Court of Spain had no expostulation addressed to it. Everything was conducted in the most profound silence. The hundreds of dead might tell their own story, and that in letters of blood.

CHAPTER VIII.

COMPULSORY SILENCE.

THE world is not so helpless that it cannot more or less protect itself; and if garrulous people irritate, men are able to resist and punish. I hope to point out in this chapter some of the devices with which they have restrained their too aggressive neighbours. Possibly, their devices have not been altogether effectual, being too external in their applications, but, no doubt, they have carried a certain moral weight. We may not altogether approve in these enlightened days of some of the methods of the past, but we must confess that the irritation must have been great before they ventured to apply them. Rough days reveal rough ways.

In the home we see the compulsory system at work even to-day.

There is the ferocious plan, which shouts out with exceeding vehemence, "Hold your tongue this minute," and, the words are accompanied by corresponding gesticulations and grimaces meant to be awe-inspiring. It, perhaps, may answer for a minute, but never for long, for the child soon learns that there is

a great distinction to be drawn between irritation and principle, and, calculating that it must be some time before the boiling pitch can be reached once more, does not hesitate to take the risk, and talk again.

Then there is the forcible method of sending the child into a corner, where he possibly employs the time in picking holes in the paper, for lack of something better to do. And when he is supposed to have learned the lesson completely he is fetched out.

As a last resource, he is sent to bed where, if he does not cry himself to sleep, he lies wondering what tongues were made for except to talk, and why older people, who offend far worse than he, are not sent to bed too.

At school the compulsion continues, and with more immediate success, for drastic methods are more available, and the blows heavier. But the cure is as far off as ever. Let the dreaded master retire for a few moments from the school, and we know how misrule and noise make their immediate advent. Chaos has entered with a vengeance.

We do not say that these efforts are quite useless, for the child at least knows that silence has its lawful place, and that unlawful breaches of it bring their drawbacks. But the results are certainly not commensurate with the means.

Our rude forefathers devised some wonderful apparatus for the correction of the ultra garrulous and, with the thoroughness of their age, applied it ruthlessly. Hardened, seasoned cases met

with little mercy, and I am afraid the idea of punishment outran the notion of cure.

I am sorry to say that women were the chief sufferers, which possibly was due not so much to the superiority of the men as to the weakness of the victims, women's rights being entirely shelved in those days, and men alone being the judges.

The *ducking stool* was one of these terrible instruments for the correction of culprits. Its name explains its nature; it was composed of a chair, and a beam, which, moving on a pivot, was easily dropped into the water alongside which it was placed. Strapped into the chair, the hardened sinner was plunged into the water, from which discipline it was hoped that she would emerge softened and humbled.

Apparently, none but scolds were thus treated, and scolds of the more malignant sort, who had dropped bitter venom on good names, and had disturbed the public peace with their railings.

But ducking was not the worst of the process, for, being a public spectacle, the jeers of the unfriendly crowd added considerably to the punishment.

This was at times further aggravated by the water being made muddy, the idea being that dirty water was more in accordance with the soiled nature of the sinner who was to be ducked.

In pictures of the punishment extant the scold is seen vigorously expostulating, with her hands clenched and uplifted, and her mouth

pursed up as if in the act of cursing. She evidently was the village terror.

A later machine for the mechanical treatment of a similar type of woman was the *branks*, or *scold's bridle*. Here iron took the place of cold water. It must have been a far more effective instrument than the ducking-stool, since it left no opportunity for speech at all. It controlled the tongue absolutely.

Imagine hoops of metal passed round the neck and head, hinged to one another, and fastened at the back by a padlock. Attached was a plate which pressed in upon the tongue itself, and kept it immovable. These were the branks.

Equipped in these, the scold was led round the town by a police officer, and shown off to the unsympathetic spectators. A more abject specimen of compulsory silence it would be hard to imagine.

On clear signs of penitence they were taken off.

The history of one of these branks has come down to us, showing how a sufferer from an unwholesome tongue took his revenge. A Mr. Chester, having lost an estate from some woman's babbling, felt the loss so keenly, that he had some branks made, and presented them to the town of Walton-on-Thames, where they are still to be found, so it is said. Bearing the date of 1633, they are inscribed with this couplet :—

> "Chester presents Walton with a bridle,
> To curb women's tongues that talk so idle."

It seems that at times the Church stepped in

to take the garrulous in hand, and scrupled not even to excommunicate. This must have been a severe punishment when excommunication involved so much. An instance of this strong judgment happened in the year 1614, and Dame Margaret, wife of John Bache, of Cheddesley, was the subject. She was charged with being "a common scold, and a sower of strife amongst her neighbours, and hath been presented for a scold at the Leete holden for the Manor of Cheddesley, and for misbehaving her tongue towards her mother-in-law at a visitation at Bromsgrove, and was excommunicated therefore."

It is possible that the mother-in-law may have been aggravating, and that she was hard to live with. Anyway, before condemning the daughter-in-law, we should prefer first to hear her story. Certainly, a mother-in-law who could take this severe method of holding up her son's wife to such opprobrium must have been somewhat vindictive and hard.

In early and more barbaric days, rulers took drastic measures to still and silence the tongue even to the extent of cutting it out.

The "good old times" were not so excellent as men say, for the common events of those days horrify the minds of the present generation. Their exploits were simply unthinkable. And to know that men, bearing the name of Christian, should be guilty of such barbarities, fills our hearts with shame. Yet the Arian Hunneric is said to have performed this mutilation, and to have gloried in it.

Heretics were little respected in those hot days of controversy. But let us hear Gibbon's story of the abomination :—

"Tipasa, a maritime colony of Mauritania, had been distinguished in every age by the orthodox zeal of its inhabitants. They had braved the fury of the Donatists ; they resisted or eluded the tyrrany of the Arians. The town was deserted on the approach of a heretical Bishop ; most of the inhabitants, who could procure ships, passed over to the coasts of Spain ; and the unhappy remnant, refusing all communion with the usurpers, still presumed to hold their pious but illegal assemblies. Their disobedience exasperated the cruelty of Hunneric. A military Count was despatched from Carthage to Tipasa ; he collected the Catholics in the Forum, and, in the presence of the whole province, deprived the guilty of their right hands and tongues."

But the end aimed at was, it appears, not achieved, for, although they remained tongueless, they continued to speak without tongues.

Whatever we may think of the miracle, the lesson is clear enough that to silence the tongue is not enough, so long as the principles remain the same. Earnest men are not to be so easily silenced, and another way will soon be found to speak out the heart's secrets.

If these holy men of old were willing to lose their tongues for Christ's sake, it is only what others have done for their cherished creeds. Thus Zeno, the philosopher, once, when bidden to divulge some treasured secret, and put to

the torture to obtain it, actually bit off his own tongue, and spat it out at the tyrant who thus pressed him. He thus cut off the possibility of betraying his secret.

Among the compulsory silences of history, we must not omit to chronicle that of the silence cure *for the criminal.*

The Quakers of Pennsylvania, deeming silence to be a wonderful sedative for all restless and tempted souls, tried it in their prisons:—

"Every prisoner was kept continually in complete isolation. He saw no one, spoke to no one, and did no work."

It was well thought out, and benevolently conceived, but it did not achieve its purpose. Some, under the stress of this unnatural silence and seclusion, fell ill. Some committed suicide, unable to endure the life. While others simply went mad.

There is all the difference in the world between silence voluntarily chosen and for the period of one's own choice, and that prolonged for months in gaol.

Later on, they combined work with the silence, and shortened the period of the sentence, but it was never a great success even thus modified.

In our present system silence is not altogether eliminated, for no prisoner may speak to another, and for most of their time they are debarred speech with all except the chaplain or warders.

But the alert prisoner, who wishes to convey information or greeting, does it by an elaborate system of knocks or signs well understood by

the initiated. Moreover, in the Sunday services, he manages to pass on silent messages. Most precautions can be circumvented by the ingenious and determined.

Individuals have devised methods for securing silence which have had only a temporary success. Sir Walter Raleigh invented one such seal. It seems that one of his companions was a bold, impertinent fellow named Charles Chester. But Chester was a perpetual talker, and the room in which he happened to be boomed like a drum. It was necessary to stop him. One day Sir Walter beat him at a tavern, and sealed up his mouth by means of his moustache and beard, sticking them together with hard wax. But whether Charles Chester learned the lesson, and how he took the joke, history does not declare.

Plans have also been suggested, without being applied, for the reclamation of inveterate talkers and listeners to evil chatter.

Dr. Southey, for instance, recommended that the tale-bearer and the tale-listener, should be hanged back to back, one by his ears, and the other by his tongue.

There have been *ecclesiastical* methods of shutting mouths which have had a large vogue, and are not indeed out of fashion in certain quarters to-day. Given great powers, and those of a spiritual character, and denunciations are bound to have some effect.

Thus, the Roman Church set herself to shut heretical mouths by all possible means, even of death itself. And the story of her exploits

is common history. By rack and torment, by deep and dismal dungeons, by fire and sword, she sought in those old days to close inconvenient lips. If they were poisoned, she argued, better not to breathe. If tongues talked error, better to kill. And the story of the hateful Inquisition is the story of her efforts to shut the lips of men and women, and to reduce them to utter silence.

Galileo taught as a scientific truth that the earth was not the centre of the universe, and that it moved round the sun ; he was promptly brought to book, and silenced. And when he sought to say the same thing, after his recantation, in a circuitous way, he was consigned to the care of a high ecclesiastic who was to see that he never offended again by pen or tongue.

Miguel di Molinos taught mystic truths, which, at one time, all Rome drank in with avidity, but when a heresy of some hidden sort was scented, the prison doors swung open, and closed upon him, never to open again. He might talk to the prison walls ; he could do them no harm.

Giordano Bruno, teaching some free opinions on subjects which the Church of Rome had foreclosed, was burnt alive as the most effectual way of consuming a hateful heresy. But almost under the shadow of the Vatican, in the Campo di Fiori, his statue speaks for all time.

Paul Crew, bringing letters from the Hussites at Prague, to influence the Scotch for the Reformation, was, as we are told in Lindsay's History of the Reformation, tried and con-

demned by the Inquisition, and, when he was burned, the executioner placed a ball of brass in his mouth, that the spectators might not hear his defence.

Akin to this, and even worse, is what Brandt tells us in his History of the Reformation in the Netherlands:—

"They prepared two little irons, between which the tongue was screwed, which, being seared at the tip, would swell to such a degree as to become immovable and incapable of being drawn back."

There were lesser figures in their thousands, of whom history takes no count, who were silenced in the same blistering way. They ventured to think for themselves, according to the Word of God, and further dared to declare it openly, and the faggot and the stake did their tragic work in reducing them to eternal silence. It was the last and most telling argument that a darkened church could use, and it used it to the bitter end.

But Protestants have not been altogether blameless in this rough method of employing death as a silencer, though not in the same ruthless way, and not to the same extent, and not, too, for the same religious reasons. As traitors to the State, rather than as misbelievers, did their victims suffer.

The past does not stand alone in this effort to silence by authority; it has survived to the present day. Do we not see an effort to stamp out any thought which leaps the barriers of creed ever so little? And are not able, learned,

and good men wandering outside the Church's ring-fence, because, insisting on using their minds, they have been cut adrift? Everything is Modernism which ventures to show a little independence of enquiry; and with anything approaching private judgment nothing but war to the knife is possible. And so the books which offend go into the Index Expurgatorius, and the writers are silenced.

But thus to silence the mind is not in these days quite feasible, for truth is carried in the air, and the whole modern tone is bound to propagate itself so far as it is true. And lips, however padlocked, are bound to spring open again, if not soon, then later.

In the *political world* there are silencers both of ancient and of modern date; for men in power are never over anxious to hear what the other side has to say. Opposition statements are too disturbing to the mind's peace.

The old Florentine method was apparently not altogether singular, and certainly procured the longed for silence. By it all discussion was disallowed, and the only person who could speak on the subject was the proposer. He might speak abundantly in its favour, but there must be no objectors, except in the final voting.

Max Müller tells us of a plan adopted with excellent effect in one of the islands in the South Seas. An orator might speak indeed, but only so long as he could stand on one leg. Once the leg was dropped he must subside. A weak orator, whose balance was not first-rate,

had but little chance of getting out all that he desired to say. The strong man, however, had more time than perhaps his ability justified. It seems to have worked for brevity, and "brevity is the soul of wit."

The modern method is to work more by the clock, and with its time limit and ensuing closure, it makes short work of even needful discussion. But then, when parties are known, and a majority is secure, and it is a foregone conclusion, one may wonder what is the good of talking. The trouble is that men are so ready to make up their minds before they know what can be said on the other side. Minds which are placidly content to know no more, and are assured that they are right, whatever may be said or not said, are hardly likely to have come to any reasoned conviction at all. But where party comes before truth, nothing can be said, but "Oh! the pity of it."

There is one infallible method of compelling silence, and one which we all have put into execution at some time or another. The plan is to make space, and leave the tiresome talker severely alone. For the most inveterate babbler will perforce restrain himself if there is nobody to listen to him.

But the application of the plan is not so easy as it looks, since the hunger of the talker to expend himself is so overwhelming that he refuses to be left to himself. And if you are quick in your devices, so is he. Those who have tried to escape from a bore, know well the difficulty. And those who have been hunted

down by one will not need to be told how hot is the pursuit.

The story of Horace in his Satires has often been told as the classic illustration of the persistency of the bore; how the poet met him on the Sacra Via, and was immediately pounced on, and stuck to, in spite of herculean efforts to shake him off:—

"I was wretchedly anxious to get away from him; so one moment I quickened my pace; at times I came to a stop. I whispered anything in my servant's ear, while the perspiration was trickling down to my very ankles."

But he was as persistent as a burr, saw through all the subterfuges of Horace, and stuck close.

Horace pleaded an engagement with a sick friend on the other side of the Tiber; he mentioned a prediction of a "Sabine old woman" that "a chatter-box will end his life," and that it was as much as his life was worth to be exposed to great talkers.

Then a bright possibility came along, in the shape of a friend, Aristius Fuscus, who, he thought, knowing the man, would come to his rescue. But, to his agony, this friend proved faithless, although Horace did his best by pinches, winks, and artful suggestions. His friend pretended not to know, and broke away, fearful, no doubt, that the bore would fasten on him. At last, however, as he tells us, Apollo saved him, by throwing an accuser in his tormentor's way who wanted the bore to stand his trial, and hurried him off.

Still, the remedy is good when it can be applied, to cut yourself clear from the talking pest, and leave him, so to speak, *in vacuo*.

Courts of Justice have before now, especially in tyrannical times, sought to silence inconvenient prisoners, whose words have too visibly affected the Court and audience. Trying for a conviction, the Judges have applied the gag, and hurried over the process by the rough plan of sentencing the prisoner unheard.

Thus was it when Danton was tried by the Revolutionary Tribunal. His eloquence and passion were found so moving, that the Committee of Public Safety passed an urgent decree that the mouths of all who had "insulted justice" should be shut. Only so could they hope to secure a conviction, and hurry their terrible prisoner to the guillotine. And this they did to their everlasting shame.

So did the brutal Judge Jeffreys, when it fell to his lot to deal with the accused in his day. He judged for a conviction, too, and, no matter who the prisoner was, made it his business to shout him down, and reduce him to silence. It might be a venerable Puritan minister, or a political prisoner captured after Sedgemoor, but it was all the same, the Judge's vile mouth poured out epithets and charges so passionately and loudly, that the poor accused was simply overwhelmed by the flood, and was hurried away to death or to prison with the smallest chance of a hearing.

CHAPTER IX.

SILENT MEN.

IT is necessary to treat of principles, abstract though they are. But principles need concrete examples and illustrations to set them off. You can put principles down on paper, but throw them into solid form, and you see them in a new and more forcible light. You must make your principles walk, and talk, and live.

It is this which makes this chapter on Silent Men so important in our survey. It will prove to the incredulous that silence is not an impossibility ; that the company of the silent does not consist of insignificant people ; and that silence may well be the highway on which the great and eminent can walk gracefully.

We do not say that great names are a guarantee of truth, but we do say that they are excellent advertisements of truth, and a considerable help in setting it off.

Neither need we venture on the rash assertion that great men are always of the silent order. It is enough for our purpose to say that a good many, and those not the least, can hold their tongue, and do so at great length.

The difficulty of our task lies in the selection. With so large an area to cover, and all eras to draw upon, it is impossible to do more than take a casual specimen here and there, and hold it up for inspection. It is sufficient now to hint at the fact that silence lay at the root of many great men's greatness, and that, in their mental and moral build, silence was a valuable ingredient. They were great, and achieved great things, by virtue of their silence.

We will begin, as seems meet, with *the philosophers*. We should expect their self-control to take some such form as strong and judicious silence.

Pythagoras furnishes an excellent first illustration of the silent man, who put silence into the foremost rank of requirements.

In the first place, he had no use for the garrulous man, and sternly rejected him as a pupil. He considered such a man barren soil, in which nothing good could be expected to grow. Many a one learned his first lesson on the advantages of silence from this rough refusal.

He seems, also, to have insisted on a long apprenticeship in the acquirement of silence; three years, it is said. Having achieved this elementary prerequisite, he began his instructions. His object, evidently, was to test his pupil's capacity to keep a secret when it was divulged to him. Besides, he felt, no doubt, that only in well prepared soil could his lessons and truths take proper effect.

Moreover, his leading principle was that "everything was not to be told to everybody,"

and so he carefully picked and chose his recipients for instruction.

After he had imparted his secrets, all were sworn to secrecy, and made to promise never to divulge to mere curiosity any of the so jealously guarded mysteries. Only those likely to value and follow his teachings were to be initiated; the rest were to be rigidly excluded.

And so the Pythagorean League raised their ramparts, and kept to themselves the secrets of numbers, and harmony, and the soul, and the Deity.

Socrates, who in his early years was familiarised with the Pythagorean doctrines and method, might be expected to be a devotee of the charms of silence; and so he was.

In silence he meditated, evolving the great thoughts which Plato so nobly adopted and set forth and graced with such a grand setting and additions. He is said to have sat motionless for hours, thinking and thinking again. And his conversations and dialogues were the first-fruit of his silence. He had no patience with the Sophists, to whom words were more than sense, and took every opportunity to assail their idle verbosities. Indeed, his whole life was spent in pricking windbags, in drawing away the coverings from pretentious emptiness, and in showing how foolish were the idle declamations of men.

"Know thyself," was the constant appeal to high and low, young and old, and if he pressed the old maxim on others, he first of all pressed it on himself as the one supreme duty of life. For he knew that when self-knowledge came

all other good things might be expected to come too, humility, and balance, and good sense. And, certainly, if all men could only attain to this pitch of excellent self-knowledge, speech would soon take its rightful place as only a second best to silence.

Confucius, dear to the heart and mind of China, and reverenced throughout the world for the sublimity of his moral teachings, was another philosopher who had drilled his tongue to submission. He is brought before us as a grave person, who took even his meals with becoming gravity:—

"He did not discourse at meals; but ate in dead silence."

He ruled out of debate whole stretches of subjects as unprofitable, and worse:—

"About extraordinary things, feats of strength, states of disorder, and spiritual beings he did not like to talk."

He probably thought that such subjects led nowhere, and induced too much affectation of knowledge without reality, leading to idle and vain-glorious talk.

His high praise was for the silent. Said one to him:—

"Yung is truly virtuous, but he is not ready with his tongue."

But Confucius regarded this aspersion as being really a note of praise, for he answered:—

"What is the good of being ready with the tongue? They who meet men with smartness of speech for the most part procure themselves hatred. I know not whether he is truly

virtuous. But why should he show readiness of tongue ? "

Once, when the philosopher was sketching a man of perfect virtue in his Analects, he wrote :—

" The man of perfect virtue is cautious, and slow in speech. That is, he thinks before he speaks, and, if he thinks aright, probably does not speak at all."

Bold talkers, who rush into speech, and cannot be restrained, he takes severely in hand, and reminds them :—

" He that speaks without modesty, will find it difficult to make his words good."

Idle gossips come in for their share of blame, as we might expect :—

" To talk as we go along what we have heard in the way is to cast away our virtue."

At times, the placid Confucius is roused to the highest pitch of indignation, and almost loses his philosophic calm in making his onslaught on the bitter tongue :—

" I hate those, who, with their sharp mouths, overthrow kingdoms and families. I would prefer no speaking."

René Descartes, with whose method philosophy entered upon its more modern form, was said to have been a silent man, loving silence, and recommending it. He loved to get alone and think.

The difficulty with which he constantly battled was to find a spot quiet enough for his purpose, for, wherever he went, the clash of tongues confused him like the clang of bells in Continental cities. Paris he found impossible, for

his friends gave him no peace, and would not let him alone. Then he flew to the suburbs, and buried himself in secluded lodgings. He spent the whole morning in bed, not because he was lazy, but because it was quiet. At length, he found France impossible, and hurried away to Holland for the silence he craved. It was very pathetic, this large-brained man seeking rest, and finding it so hard to secure it.

And as he loved silence, so he practised it. "Talking was an effort to him," we are told.

So, in the books of men, he detested a too copious vocabulary :—

"A redundancy of words in the writing of others always disgusted him."

For the same reason, he carefully pruned his own writings, and declared that superfluities of expression must be omitted.

All this was just what we might have expected from a man who tried to erase everything from his mind, that he might test everything for himself, and find out truth with a satisfactory foundation to it. And so at the beginning we find him tumbling everything down about his ears, and, at the end, rebuilding it all, with the satisfaction of knowing that whatever he now believed he honestly believed for himself. The thinking world owes more than it knows to this silent, secluded thinker.

Sir Isaac Newton was another silent thinker, whose thinking far surpassed his speaking. It is reported of him that he would sit by his bedside for hours, half dressed, and engrossed in thought. It was out of those silent hours

that there flashed forth those revolutionary discoveries which so amazed the world.

"He would be silent and thoughtful," one said of him, "and look, all the while, as if he were saying his prayers."

Thomas Carlyle must have a high place among the philosophers of silence, if only for the many and high eulogies he pronounced on the silent tongue. It is true that no man broke silence so often, and at such length, but he broke it wisely.

When Margaret Fuller visited him, she gave it as her experience of his talking powers :—

"You cannot interrupt him. You are a perfect prisoner, when he once gets hold of you. To interrupt him is a physical impossibility. If you get a chance to remonstrate a moment, he raises his voice, and bears you down."

This, and similar stories, might seem to rule Carlyle out of our Gallery of the Silent. But we recall another side of him, in which he was silent ; notably so. And, however much he offended, he certainly loved silence for its own sake :—

"Alas ! nobody comes, whose talk is half so good as silence. Nay, their talk is often rather an offence to me. And I murmur to myself :— 'Why open one's lips for such a purpose ?'"

Once he advised Froude "to burn his own smoke, and not to trouble other people's nostrils with it."

It was his biographer's opinion, that Carlyle "admired quietness as he admired silence, only theoretically." But this was not his own opinion. He declared that he was "the most

silent man not locked into the solitary system to be found in all Her Majesty's dominions."

The truth probably was that Carlyle, like many others, felt at times that silence was better far, and lapsed into patches of silence when the mood struck him. But when the mood passed, then the flood-gates were opened wide, because then he felt like talking.

In times of trouble he lapsed into silence, and felt it soothe him, for in times of great calamity we all feel that silence is the better balm.

Thus, one day, when John Stuart Mill brought him the terrible news that the second manuscript-volume of his French Revolution, lent to Mill, was burnt, he said nothing. He had destroyed all his notes, and had to do the work all over again. Moreover, he was depending on the profits of that book for his home expenses. Mill was beside himself with grief, but Carlyle was, for once, quite calm:—

"On the whole, shall I not thank the Unseen? for I was not driven out of composure, hardly for moments. Walk humbly with thy God. How I longed for a Psalm, or a prayer, that I might have uttered; but there was none. Silence had to be my language."

When Carlyle lost his wife with such tragic suddenness, he again took refuge in silence, and his friends, respecting his silence, left him sympathetically alone:—

"John and F. kindly did not speak to me," he records gratefully.

"I have had many thoughts since I last saw you," he wrote to his friend, Erskine of

Linlathen, " silently mostly, and mostly beyond the domain of words."

" Vain, idle talk, which is always rife enough, I find much sadder than any form of silence," he writes again.

And when his mother died, " the few days of reflection before the funeral were spent in silence."

Benjamin Jowett, the celebrated Master of Balliol, whom we may surely class among the philosophers for his masterly expositions of Plato and Aristotle, was, by his own confession, and by the witness of his friends, a decidedly reticent man:—

" I have never anything to say to strangers," he wrote once in his diary. Not that he loved to stand aloof from pride, but that he could not discover common ground in unknown people.

Professor T. E. Green amply confirmed this :—

" His instinct was to be silent, and shun society, and few of his sayings are recorded. His strong and simple character seemed to need no words to express it."

" He said nothing, and I said nothing," was an undergraduate's report of an interview with Jowett.

" During my undergraduate days," says another, " he was singularly silent and undemonstrative. To a shy man he was positively alarming. I remember myself one occasion, when he invited me to take a walk with him. The number of words exchanged between us during that walk were incredibly few, and I believe it was a relief to both when we regained the College gates."

As years wore on it appears that Dr. Jowett in some small measure overcame his silent habit, but he never quite lost it. His friends used to say that his fits of silence had a special charm of their own, and gave immense weight to the utterances which succeeded them.

Let us now leave the philosophers, and turn to *the poets*, and see how far we may claim them as adherents of the silent cause.

Take Dante, the poet of poets, as a leading and early type.

"One smiting word," said Carlyle in his Heroes, "and then there was a silence; nothing more is said. His silence is more eloquent than his words."

"The fiery, swift, Italian nature of the man, so silent, passionate, with its quick abrupt movements, its silent, pale rages, speaks itself in these things."

Dante's silence used to be a favourite taunt of his foes. Petrarch tells us how, in the Court of Della Scala, his host took him to task for his taciturnity:—

"Is it not strange, that this poor fool should do so much to entertain us, while you, a wise man, sit there day by day, and have nothing to amuse us with at all?"

"No, it is not strange," was Dante's reply, "if you think of the proverb, 'Like to like.'"

One is tempted to ask whether, had Dante been of the garrulous order, the world would have been so ready to crown him as the supreme poet of his age, and perhaps of all ages. Would not the poet have been drowned in the talker?

Chaucer, eloquent with his pen, pouring forth his mind's fancies in such glorious profusion, is rightly held in esteem as our earliest great national poet, whose "well of English undefiled" set the language on its true course. It will surprise us to know that he could be silent too.

The Countess of Pembroke said of him that his silences were more agreeable to her than his conversation. It seems a rather left-handed compliment, but we can read between the lines, and know that no doubtful reflection was intended.

Dryden, too, was never a man to shine in society. While conversation ebbed and flowed around him, he sat silent; so it was said by the people of his day. But it often happens, that the man who with pen in hand can scarcely stop, when put upon his legs, and bidden to talk, stammers like a bashful boy. Shyness is responsible for not a little of the silence of men. Too self-conscious to be at their ease in speaking before others, they find it easier to lapse into listeners.

Pope also, in his villa at Twickenham, kept steadily at work, and indulged little in the world's small talk. It paid him better to write than to talk. Besides, he was not the man, with his acid speech, to be welcomed when he did speak. Moreover, his deformity kept him out of Society. It was this Society-silence of Pope, which led Dr. Johnson to remark :—

"It is remarkable that so near his time so much should be known of what he has written, and so little of what he has said."

Addison appears to have been a man of great reserve to the general public, and rarely launched forth at length in common conversation.

This is what Pope writes of him :—

"In any mixture of strangers, and, sometimes, only with one, he seemed to preserve his dignity with a stiff sort of silence."

Probably, he was exaggerating, when he wrote of himself in the first number of the "Spectator" :—

"I had not been long at the University before I distinguished myself by a most profound silence. For, during the space of eight years, I scarce uttered the quantity of a hundred words. And, indeed, I do not remember that I ever spoke three sentences together in my whole life."

Corneille was proclaimed the worst possible of conversationalists, and distinguished only by his finished silence.

Robert Burns, in his earlier days, sat silent in the midst of company. Perhaps, however, it was shyness rather than a love of silence, which locked his lips. But when he did summon courage, he invariably added much light to the subject under discussion. Later on, unhappily, the bottle made him break silence more than was meet.

Let us now turn our thoughts to quite a different order of men, *the theologians*. We might expect that this class would have given but few specimens of the silent order, but it is not so. And the fact that where the greatest temptations abound there the greatest merit is

to be sought is peculiarly true of the theologians who held their tongues.

St. Thomas Aquinas, the first schoolman, and a veritable giant among men, was when a youth the butt of the College of Cologne. He had such a dumb tongue, and practised so peculiarly a dead silence, that his fellow-students unanimously dubbed him "The dumb ox." They evidently thought him lacking in ability.

His master, however, Albertus Magnus, saw further than the foolish students, and told them plainly that this same dumb ox would one day fill the world with his bellowings. And they did indeed live to discover it. For when St. Thomas came to his own, speech and mind included, they changed their tune, and declared that "The ox has spoken." They then learned what the world is always slow in learning, that a long preparatory silence does not always shew a lack of intelligence, but simply the filling of an over-large reservoir. The gift of speech, when it comes early, is not the measure of the matured mind, far from it, but the reverberations of pure emptiness. Late developments are better than early precocities.

Dr. Chalmers, the eminent Scotch theologian and philanthropist, lapsed at times into tremendous silences. This is what Mr. Gladstone, who was a great admirer of Chalmers, tells of him :—

"We used to have walks together, chiefly out of town. On one of our walks, Chalmers took me to see one of his districts by the water

of Leith, and I remember that we went into one or two cottages. He went in with a smiling countenance, greeted and being greeted by the people, and sat down. But he had nothing to say. He was exactly like the Duke of Wellington who said of himself that he had no small talk. His whole mind was always full of some great subject, and he could not deviate from it. He sat smiling among the people, but he had no small talk for them, and they had no large talk. So, after some time, we came away, he pleased to have been with the people, and they proud to have the Doctor with them."

Bishop Phillips Brooks was another silent man among theologians and preachers. He loved silence for its own sake, and found it easier to say nothing than much. Those who did not know him felt his silence incomprehensible, but not his friends; they knew it was part of his great build.

"He was subject to rare moods of silence, utter silence," said Dr. Weir Mitchell of him. "I have seen him sit through a dinner party, and hardly utter a word."

His biographer tells the same story:—

"He was silent when all were talking, as he had kept a rigid silence at every turning-point of his life."

A lesser man would have been afraid to keep such silence, and would have blurted out something to save his face. But he was strong enough to be silent when he felt that silence was better than speech, or had nothing important to impart.

Archbishop Temple had the firmest possible grip on his tongue, and could hold it with the best. The trouble was, that, when he did give it liberty, it lashed out with unpleasant force. No blunter man ever lived, and no kindlier. He was so transparently honest, that, no matter what he said, no one could long take offence.

And silence more than once in his career proved the best of allies to him, and saved the situation.

Thus, in the famous Essays and Reviews controversy, the whole battle raged round his silent form, until it raged itself out.

"At this time," Dr. Percival said of him, "and at some other periods of his life, he was a silent man."

It was noted, too, of him that "he did things without saying that he intended to do them."

Mr. Lee Warner, when a boy at Rugby School, gives his experience of the Master's silences, and provides a clue to many of his later ones:—

"I would sometimes ask a question, which produced a long silence. How I dreaded these silences! They set me to wonder whether I had asked a wrong question, or asked it wrongly. Then, suddenly, he would begin to answer, having arranged his thoughts, and secured that mine were in order."

Bishop Ellicott once spoke with approval of that great silent party whose voices were never heard in Church Congresses, who wrote no letters to the papers, and took no bustling part in current controversies. The popular notion

that all the talent of the Church must be to the front and prominently in evidence is so far from correct that the best talent must often be sought among the humbler and more modest. It is far from being true that the silent party is the stupid party.

There is one alleged instance of silence amongst *sailors* which is worth noting, namely, that of Admiral Lord Fisher, who is said to have had the notice:—

"Silence! Deeds, not words,"

posted up in every ship which he has commanded.

Let us think now of the *soldiers*.

It is easy to see how necessary silence is to a soldier, whose duty is to know his opponent's secrets, and to conceal his own. A babbling soldier is a positive danger.

And with temptations to divulge plans and details, he has need to learn silence when captured by the enemy, and pressed to tell, it may be, for dear life. A silent lip then may save an army.

The Duke of Wellington was a well-known exponent of the art of silence in war, and won many a battle by it. He used up all his energy in hard blows, and preparations for them. Talk, for talking's sake, was abhorrent to him. And in his own home affairs, he was equally uncommunicative, going straight to the heart of the business, and wasting no words.

An instructive illustration of his reticent spirit is told us by one who was negotiating for the rental of a house on behalf of the Duke, and who came one day for instructions. He

found the great soldier buckling on his sword, preparatory to visiting Carlton House. Here is the conversation set down at length:—

"The rent of the house is so much."

"Take it."

"The taxes are so much."

"Pay them."

"The furniture is so much."

"Buy it. Have you anything more to say?"

"No, Sir."

"Then good morning."

Moltke, the great German strategist, was famous for his silence, and everybody knows that being a master of seven languages, he could be silent in them all. He was the very ideal of a strenuous worker, who never let himself be entangled in a mesh of words. And he never gave himself away. Silently he arranged, silently he bided his time, and, when the clock struck, Moltke was ready. He was the past master in the art of every strife except the strife of tongues. The tongue, indeed, was the organ of least importance in his constitution.

There was a time in the life of Washington when silence stood him in good stead. Had he been less silent, the issue of his campaigns might have been different. Slanderers dogged his footsteps, and evil tongues tried hard to besmirch his fair fame, with the view, probably, of diverting his course. But he went on his way unheeding, and was content to do his simple duty. And he found, as all traduced souls may discover, that in the atmosphere of silence noxious things die.

He lived it all down by the simple expedient of taking no notice. And, as a yelping dog gives up an unremunerative chase, by the astonishing fact that he is allowed to bark unnoticed, so Washington's foes relinquished in despair their vile purpose of drawing him into the garrulous open. If the lion is not to be roused, he must be left alone. And thus he freed his country.

It is not often, however, that a man gains the name, as well as the character, of Silent, as was the case with William of Orange. It happened, as we well know, from one bit of silent strategy by which he circumvented his Spanish foes.

The French King, Henry II, with whom William was hunting in the Forest of Vincennes, communicated to him the horrible plot, which had been arranged between him and Spain, to massacre all the Protestants in France and the Netherlands. Henry was but a foolish babbler thus to give away so great a secret, and knew not the man to whom he was opening his heart. William showed no emotion, and kept a calm face under the disclosure, but in that moment he made up his mind to checkmate so diabolical a conspiracy. In silence he formed his plans, gathered his friends, and, with the same silence, dug beneath the threatened mine, and blew up his country's enemies instead.

His silence saved his country, and if, in the effort, he was fated to lay down his own life, he grudged it not for the love he bore her. Silence is honoured to have placed to its credit so noble an illustration of her power.

In the *world of politics* silence has her devotees, albeit but few. For politics is mostly the game of babblers, who know less than they say, and who, but for a ready tongue, would never have risen into public view and consideration.

After Solon had promulgated his famous laws for Athens, he left his country for some ten years. He cared not to be pestered by stupid criticisms, and was anxious that his laws should be well digested by those for whose sake they were made. Having done his duty, he left the results to the silent acceptance of the people. But he took the precaution of compelling the Athenians to observe his laws until he came back ; and they took their oath to do so.

Talleyrand was excellently silent at right moments, and showed his genius by knowing when those moments came. No one ever caught him off his guard. And no one could ever draw him.

Once he was asked point blank what had passed at a certain ministerial gathering, and his bland answer was, " Three hours."

Wellington was much struck by his silences, and, when asked whether Talleyrand was good company, answered that he was not :—

" He would sit silent for hours. But once or twice of an evening he would talk ; and you could not forget it as long as you lived."

This is quite in accordance with what we read of his more youthful days, for, being forced into the priesthood against his will, he "hardly spoke a word during the three years at the Seminary of St. Sulpice."

With burrowing correspondents at every

capital, it is a wonder that there are not more indiscretions among public men, and even when secrets are presumably told, it would perhaps be truer to believe that someone outside has evolved it from his own mind. Great men are not such fools as to tell secrets to casuals unless they intend to draw a red herring across the track.

One great temptation, which the rank and file of the political world are continually exposed to, is the temptation to make speeches.

Many a quiet man has been goaded to talk because the world at large has faith only in wind-bags. Your free and independent elector can only appreciate a talker; rarely a quiet thinker. But, happily, here and there, are strong men, who can hold their tongues, and yet listen and vote wisely, which is, after all, what they are in Parliament to do.

Such a man was Andrew Marvel, in the days of the Commonwealth, who, with abundance of sense, and a notable man of letters, hardly ever opened his mouth in Parliament, although he sat as member for eighteen years. But he did excellent work, nevertheless, and was not an idle or merely consenting member.

Gibbon, too, was a notably silent member, preferring evidently to turn his attention to the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, than to his own decline and fall into unsatisfactory speech. We are allowed to ascertain his motives for Parliamentary silence :—

" Prudence condemned him to acquiesce in the humble station of a mute. The great

speakers filled him with despair; the bad ones with terror."

And, surely, there would be far fewer speakers if self were less prominent, and the effort to stand well with the constituents in the background could be relaxed. The danger is that inefficiency talks, and mediocrity plays the fool.

Artists can be as silent as most people, and sometimes more silent.

Probably, the fact that they must often work alone, and that many can only work alone, leads them to this love of silence. They doubtless have found, as many others have done, that they cannot both talk and work. It must be either one or the other.

One famous artist I know of, who, if anybody addresses him when he is painting out of doors, covers up his picture, and stops work. He has even packed up and walked away in high dudgeon at being thus interrupted. One might almost as well stop a preacher in the midst of his flowing periods to ask a foolish question.

All, no doubt, are not so sensitive, but many are, and have been.

Thus Michael Angelo was a most silent worker, and could only do his best work when left alone. Vasari tells us:—

"He speaks but little, and when he does open his mouth, his tongue can be as sharp as a chisel."

Now and again, we get glimpses of him at work, and it is a silent man upon whom we gaze.

We see him in Florence, working at a huge block of marble, intent on making something memorable out of that which others had

despaired of. Shut up rigorously, he chiselled away in secret, and in utter silence. Eighteen months after, the doors swung open, and there stood revealed the giant statue of David, one of the glories of Florence.

His work in the Sistine Chapel, in the Vatican, we all know of, and many have seen. But we may not know how his soul was vexed and irritated by the idle chatter of the crowd who watched him at his work. It was the trial of his life, this working under the public eye. But, if the silence was broken, it was not on his part. He steadily worked on to the finish in silence.

Sir Joshua Reynolds was a silent painter, according to his sister :—

"His manners were indeed affable and obliging, but he flattered nobody. Instead of gossiping, and making it his study to amuse his sitters, he minded only his own business. I remember being in the next room the first time the Duchess of Cumberland came to sit, and I can vouch that scarce a word was spoken for nearly two hours."

And this was of a piece with Sir Joshua's own assertion, that, for a painter to succeed, he must cut out his tongue.

Oliver Goldsmith hits off well this usefulness of silence to his friend in his jocular epitaph :—

"To coxcombs averse, yet most civilly steering,
When they judged without skill, he was still hard of hearing.
When they talked of their Raphaels, Correggios, and stuff,
He shifted his trumpet and only took snuff."

In all these illustrations I have tried to give the estimate of others of their silent propensities, because there are many who claim the virtue of reticence without just cause.

It is a sober truth that few of the garrulous people of the world have any conception of their failing, and even fancy that they are most reticent, like Dr. Johnson, who claimed to be a silent man, and who once quoted with evident pleasure the witness of a flattering friend :—

"Tom Tyers described me best," said Johnson. "He once said to me 'Sir, you are like a ghost, you never speak until you are spoken to.'"

In looking over these pages I notice a very serious omission, for which I ask the pardon of my lady readers. I find my illustrations have been confined to the sterner sex. I need not say that this implies no disrespect to the gentler one. It has simply happened so, from the simple fact that men have bulked more largely on the public eye and ear than women. I have no doubt that women have been as wisely silent as men, but they have had, unfortunately, no chroniclers. I would gladly have put them on as high a pedestal ; yea, I would have built a still higher one for them. Undoubtedly, there have been many great and silent women ; only they have escaped notice.

CHAPTER X.

IGNOBLE SILENCE.

ONE of the Duke of Wellington's pregnant remarks was that, in all campaigns, it was of the first importance to discover what is happening on the other side of the hill; and this he always made it his business to find out.

The rule of the Iron Duke is applicable to any cause which seeks to win its battles, and he who does not take pains to see the other side is not likely to know his own properly. For lack of it, we hold our balances unjustly, and push our advantages to the verge of untruth.

That silence has many advantages we have set ourselves to prove, and it has not been a difficult task. But must we reduce ourselves to dumbness, or deny the virtues of speech?

So let me say definitely that silence, under certain conditions, may be absolutely wrong. There is an ignoble silence, which we must not be guilty of, if we would live clean and wholesome lives.

Let us pass in review some of these ignoble silences, and clear ourselves of all complicity with them.

If, as we all believe, the motive gives the

quality to the deed, then nothing which has the brand of a bad motive can be worthy. Silences, therefore, which spring from an unclean motive, must share the uncleanness. This is the evil of calculated silence.

Thus, we cannot justify the *silence of flattery*; flattery, that is, which in a cold-blooded, calculating way, takes the form of silence to deepen the effect. It is a sheer bit of dissimulation, and strikes a posture, which is only acted falsity. We all recognise the type; the uplifted hands, the look of amazed surprise as if overpowered with admiration, the gasp which is all that can be expressed. And, all the time, down below in the heart, there is absolutely nothing to correspond.

In the days of Queen Christina of Sweden, there came a Spanish Ambassador to Court, Don Antonio Pimentalli, who seems to have been a past master in the art of silent flattery:—

"On his first audience, presented to Christina seated upon her throne, he simply bowed, and withdrew; explaining, in a subsequent interview, that, struck dumb by the brilliancy of her presence, the intervening hours had been necessary to enable him to collect himself sufficiently to appear before her." And Christina, with all her cleverness, seems to have absorbed the silent flattery, not realising that this was one of the arts of diplomacy, and meant just nothing.

Ignoble too is the *silence of concealment*, when that concealment is intended to deceive, and convey a false impression. All the same, we

must not be over-ready to impute an evil motive on mere suspicion.

"Many a medical reputation," it has been said, "is built on nothing else than the power of looking wise, and saying little."

It has often happened that some material fact has been suppressed which would have altered the course of justice had it been revealed. Here silence is criminal.

And it has happened, too, that some valuable medical remedy has been concealed for purposes of gain, and men have gone to their graves, unhealed, for lack of it.

Any concealment which hurts the community, which breeds a confidence which is unfounded, which allows men and women to run into unnecessary danger, must be ignoble. All this concealment is of the essence of a lie.

Thus the Fellows of Trinity in olden days, who were forbidden by statute to marry, yet did marry in spite of it, and received the endowments meant only for the unmarried, were guilty of this ignoble silence.

One of them, when asked how he managed to evade the law of the college so successfully, answered :—

"My dear Sir, a man who can hold his tongue, can hold anything."

"Findings are keepings," said the man who found a fat purse and said nothing about it. And he did not realise that he was next door to a thief, and that his concealment was criminal.

An honest man was Dr. Hook, who, when he was warned by Bishop Harcourt :—

"If you don't mind your tongue, and your pen, you will never get on," answered :—

"I am in the place that exactly suits me. I don't want to get on. I would rather speak my mind."

But the immorality of concealments and silences is too large a subject, and capable of too large illustration, to be treated adequately.

There is an ignoble silence which has its roots in *cowardly dislike of giving others even necessary pain.* Some people are silent because they like peace at any price, and so they sacrifice others for the sake of their own quietness of mind. There is a great deal of cowardice in this.

Goethe definitely set his face against this cowardly silence :—

"In religious, scientific, and political matters, I generally brought trouble on myself, because I was no hypocrite, and had the courage to express what I felt."

Not, of course, that we must say all that is in our minds, or be plain spoken to the point of brutality, or interfere unnecessarily in other men's affairs.

Sa'adi provides us with an illustration of ignoble silence because of the pain and trouble that speech may cause. His counsel is :—

"If you have anything to communicate which will distress the heart of the person whom it may concern, be silent in order that he may hear it from some one else. O nightingale ! bring thou the glad tidings of spring, and leave bad news to the owl."

For sheer and heartless selfishness this is hard to beat, throwing, as it does, unpleasant duties

on other shoulders than our own, just to save ourselves pain and unpopularity.

There is also an ignoble silence which has its roots in *meanness.*

Such is the silence which is found when some opponent is praised, and we prefer not to speak lest we may have to praise too. So we sit glum and silent amidst the chorus of kindly words, cherishing the bitterness of our poor mean souls.

Then there is the silent action which bespeaks no less meanness, withdrawing from the company lest we may be committed to some undesirable action or word.

Theophrastus, that acute observer of odd humanity, thus singles out one particular specimen of the mean:—

"When subscriptions for public emergencies are being made, he will rise in silence from his place in the Ecclesia, and go out from the midst."

Just as some people go out of church before the last hymn and the collection.

And there are many, who, in discussing the qualities of their neighbours, are careful to emphasize the bad ones, and are altogether silent concerning the good. Surely, this is the very height of mean and ignoble silence.

But not all silences are so coolly calculated as these of which we have been speaking. There are many which spring from a defective nature, and are therefore of deeper root.

The *misanthrope*, for instance, who, with his ill-conditioned soul, is silent from pure dislike of his kind. Like a savage dog, his nature is to fall out with his fellows. Sometimes, he will

snap, and spit out nasty, venomous words, but the worst manifestation is the silent one.

"The surly man," wrote Theophrastus, "is one who, when asked where so and so is, will say, 'Don't bother me,' or, when spoken to, will make no reply."

Who does not know the man with his sullen silences, and who does not give him as wide a berth as possible? The temper which rises like a flash soon subsides, but that which burns more slowly often burns long, and is hard to extinguish. This is the man who glowers and darkens, and says never a word. Bad to live with is this type of humanity.

Should such a person fall out with another, far, far away is the possibility of reconciliation. No words of confession will readily fall from those tightly closed lips. No petition for forgiveness is he ever likely to utter.

I have read of two such characters, sisters, who, having quarrelled, maintained a dead silence for twenty years, although living under the same roof, and meeting almost daily. And when one of the two lay dying, the silence was sternly maintained to the bitter end.

How well that common expression hits off sullen silence, "Not on speaking terms!"

And yet, if one had only spoken the first word, the sullenness might have passed. But it is as hard to speak the first word as it is easy to have the last one.

One bitter root of ignoble silence is *pride*, and it is one of the most hateful of all. It is hard to imagine how any mortal man can so swell himself

with a false estimate as to think others are beneath him, or unworthy of his notice. Yet so it is. Daily, men are "cutting one another dead," and passing one another in the streets as if the other were made of commoner clay. They are too proud to know them.

Theophrastus thus describes such a man:—

"He will not permit himself to give any man the first greeting. When he walks in the streets, he will not speak to those he meets, keeping his head bent down, or at other times, when it so pleases him, erect."

And yet they are citizens of the same town, members, it may be, of the same church, and owning the same great Father. What are they proud of?

It is from this ugly root of pride that silly vows of silence are sometimes made. There was one foolish woman, a Miss Caroline Bremer, who, because she had quarrelled with her lover, vowed that she would never speak a word to any living creature. And, astonishing to say, she kept her vow for thirty-five years. Wonderful tenacity of purpose, and stupendous folly!

But, given a faulty nature, we need not be surprised at anything which proceeds from it; and one of the commonplaces of life is the wonderful array of oddities which museums of humanity reveal. This proud silence is not the least odd of its exhibits.

Not a few of life's ignoble silences come from *inward sluggishness;* the difficulty of working oneself up to utter the becoming word.

People are not all really ungrateful, who

appear so by their silences. They are only inert. Not that this is an apology for their want of thanks. It is only intended as an explanation.

Carlyle appears to have possessed this phlegmatic disposition, this silent temperament, which could not rouse itself enough to say "Thank you" properly, even to his wife. And bitterly did he regret it after she was gone.

"If I could but see her once more, were it but for five minutes, to let her know that I always loved her. But she never knew it; never."

It is a common failing to take things for granted, thankfulness included. And so, when benefits fall into our hands, the matter ends there, as though we need give no response at all, except to open our hands, and close them again. The lips are left out of the business. All the rest is unexpressed.

Some are too lazy to speak, and strike out in the line of least resistance, fearing the burden that speaking may fabricate. Human nature never appears so poor and meagre as when men thus shrink from shouldering the burdens of life, and are only active in their plans to escape them. It is like a soldier maiming himself on the day of battle, that he may have a reason for going to the rear, and away from the firing line. It is like a citizen refusing to sound the cry of "Fire!" because he does not want to pass the bucket.

The Burmans have this lack of response, apparently, according to their apologist, Fielding Hall:—

"They always assume that you know your own business best, and will leave you alone to do it. And he carries it to an extent which surprises us. Suppose you are walking along a road, and there is a broken bridge in the way, a bridge that you may fall through, no one will prevent your going."

Fielding Hall assures us that the root of this inattention to your danger is due to an excess of courtesy. Less charitable folk will see in it an ignoble silence, based, too largely, on an excess of laziness and fatalism.

"You could drift," he tells us again, "all the way from Bhamo to Rangoon on a log, and I am sure no one would try to pick you up, unless you shouted for help." Strange courtesy!

This apathetic nature is not positive ill-nature; far from it. It is full of excellent intentions, but somehow they do not come off. They are frustrated by native inertia, and all this silence is ignoble from sheer indolence and phlegm.

Sometimes, the apology is offered for this lack of response that it is better to forego it for discipline's sake. Silence is good, they say, for the other, because if thanks were too eager they might generate a spirit of pride and conceit. They emulate the starvation doctors, who keep their patients low by restricting their food.

Charles Dickens takes off this type of person in Bleak House, when Mr. Bagnet, the ex-artilleryman, discusses his wife's excellences with his friend George:—

"You know," he says, "that it is my wife which advises, and I always take her advice. But I never tell her so."

"She is a treasure," murmured Mr. George.

"She is more," quickly replies the husband. "She is like a fine day, which grows finer as it advances. I never knew her equal. But I never tell her so."

"She is worth her weight in gold," responds Mr. George.

"In gold!" answers Mr. Bagnet, "there is no metal that can be weighed against her. Think of her as high as the rock of Gibraltar, and you will think too low of her merits. But I never tell her so."

Probably Mrs. Bagnet, if consulted, might have said that she preferred being "told so" now and then.

Of course, where there is a perfect understanding between those who love, praise is not always necessary, or expected. Light steals through small crevices, and, even though it be not heralded, makes itself felt. Love understands even silence.

Children are the chief victims of this disciplinary silence, praise being supposed, by some strict souls, to be as bad for them as an excess of sweets. Poor little robbed souls, who does not sympathise with them?

It was one such little sufferer who expostulated on the deprivation. He said to his father, who distributed far more blame than praise:—

"I often do wrong, I know, and then you

scold me. But, father, sometimes I do my best to do right. Won't you let me know, please, when I do please you?"

It was a pathetic little cry, and we can imagine how the father's system of silence was shattered by the little hands.

There is another example of ignoble silence due to *forgetfulness.*

Want of thought is responsible for much of the world's miseries, and is often the cause of ignoble silence.

How much this may also be due to want of heart is a worthy subject for examination. In some cases it is undoubtedly so; but not by any means all.

There is the silence from letter writing, which is the most common form of it, and which is so keenly felt by those who love. When the children are scattered, the lonely parents naturally expect the chasm to be bridged by the post. And when families are scattered, and are fighting lonely battles in various parts of the globe, it is a comfort to know that there are some who are thinking of you, and that you are not quite alone in the world.

This was Huxley's feeling, when he wrote his sister a sharp remonstrance for her silence; a rather unusual instance, as it is generally the sisters who offend the least in letter-writing:—

"Do not be silent long again. It is bad for both of us. I have loved but few people in my life, and am not likely to care for any more, unless it be my children. Don't let us drift asunder again."

No doubt it is true, as another brother once said to his sister :—

"We know one another better than to interpret our silence as any decay of affection."

Still, such silence is dangerous, opening the door to sad constructions, and damping down the fires which, in this imperfect world, constantly require stoking.

Naturally, letter-writing is only one such instance of forgetfulness. There are many others, which will readily suggest themselves to our minds.

It is not by silence that we "keep our friendships in repair," but by kindly words and friendly visits. Little attentions, often rendered, have a wondrous power in knitting hearts together; and in a thousand ways love finds means to break silence happily.

All have not the genius for bridge building, but it can be cultivated, and ought to be. And we shall find that what we do kindly will lead others to do the same to us, and so, when old age comes, we shall have no need to lament the loneliness of it, for our past good words and deeds will come back to us in ministrations many and welcome.

The *withholding of good news* is a type of ignoble silence which is most reprehensible.

Fortunately, it is not an ordinary failing of humanity, for, as a rule, we are most keen to give good tidings of any sort to anybody, especially aiming at being the first to carry it.

But there are times when to tell would clash

with personal interests, and then a fit of silence may intervene.

There are times, too, when we do not want to take the trouble to go out of our way to tell even good news, and from sheer laziness keep silent. And so we put our own comfort before the happiness of another. This too is ignoble.

But, from a Christian point of view, the silence which keeps back spiritual good news is the worst of all. The silent Christian is not at all an estimable character, because he is violating the very religion he professes to hold. This is the strange, incomprehensible feature of those who take no interest in Foreign Missions, and refuse to assist those who go forth to tell the good news of the Gospel of Christ. Are they not decidedly guilty of a very ignoble silence?

The lepers of Samaria who, after having satisfied their own hunger, awoke to the sad fact that they were keeping it to themselves, and blamed themselves for it, are a lesson to many to-day :—

"This is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace."

The *silence of cowardice* is another ignoble one. The fact that speech will possibly bring punishment, or ostracism, or inconvenience, is sufficient with some to padlock their lips. They are afraid to speak because of the consequences.

Thus innocent men have gone to punishment and even death, because some fearful soul dared not run the risk associated with speaking out. He has withheld his witness from ignoble motives.

How often will children keep back confession because of the possible punishment which will follow! How often will servants say nothing about their breakages, for fear of the anger and reproaches of their mistresses! And many a young man has groaned under the burden of debt, because he was not brave enough to confess it.

To keep back our convictions, because someone in authority will be shocked or angry, is not at all a noble silence.

There is hardly a sphere in life, whether in religion, politics, or Society, where this ignoble silence is not practised, and all for fear of the consequences.

Franklin was quite right when he said that we shall have to give account for not only every idle word, but for every idle silence.

There is, too, such a thing as *suppressed speech.*

We say something, but not all, and the part we suppress of the truth is often the most important. Indeed, the suppression turns our words almost into untruths. It is like leaving out some ingredient in a doctor's prescription; it spoils the whole.

How few characters given by old masters or mistresses are wholly true! Wrong impressions are sometimes deliberately made by wilful omissions, and faults are softened beyond recognition by disguising words. We may not be bound to say all about those of whom we are writing, but we are bound not to convey a false impression. If we need not volunteer

information to another's prejudice, neither must we answer questions in an ambiguous way, so as to deceive the applicant. Silence on vital points of character is entirely ignoble, and should be shunned.

In the old biographies, the chief defect was the omission of all blemishes in the subject. All was sunshine, with never a shadow. We can appreciate the motives of the writer in wishing to speak well of the dead, but it is better to speak truly. Everybody knows that all lives have some blemishes, and, when they find them omitted, they feel that the life has lost its true atmosphere, and is like a portrait with all the wrinkles and lines erased. Fortunately, now-a-days, a truer estimate of biography has come upon the scene, and we have rather gone to the other extreme, saying what perhaps should have been kept back.

Other illustrations of ignoble silence will doubtless occur to my readers; let these, however, suffice as representative samples. As a rule, we may say that when it is our duty to speak, and we hold our peace, then the silence is ignoble. There may be various degrees of ignobleness, but these will be judged pretty accurately by those whose moral sense is at all delicate.

CHAPTER XI.

PRIME OFFENDERS.

IS there man or woman living whose tongue is under perfect control? Who never breaks silence unnecessarily? Who never offends in word? If there is such an exception, no one has ever seen him, and no one has ever heard of him. We shall have to put him under the same category as the famous Phœnix, or the still more apocryphal Unicorn.

But why hunt about for the non-existent man, when we have an inspired dictum on the matter? St. James tells us, "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man."

But when we enquire whether all offend alike, another reply must be given. All transgress, but not in the same measure. Some offend wantonly, constantly, effusively, and offensively. It is these who stand apart as a class in sad and solitary pre-eminence. They are the prime offenders, of whom we will speak in this present chapter.

It is, of course, difficult to classify such offenders, and we can only do so with exceeding roughness. And if we seem to be unjust to any particular class, we can only apologise for

our clumsiness, and lack of delicate perception. But, whatever the dangers of such an enquiry, it is clear that garrulity does run in some grooves more than in others.

There are exceptions, of course, but the general fact is undoubtedly true.

Youth we may pronounce to be one of the prime offenders against proper reticence.

And might we not expect it to be so? He has not yet come into his own in the world of thought and ideas. He is crude and raw in his knowledge of life, and stands on the brink of the Great Unknown which stretches out before him. He is feeling about for standing ground, and too often imagines that every fog bank is substantial, and that every bit of green is solid grass, even when it is only slime. All is so far superficies, and depth is as yet unguessed by him.

And yet, with all his inexperience and rawness, he is sure of everything. Where angels fear to tread, our younger son steps out with wondrous courage, and takes his plunge with all the audacity of ignorance. He feels that he has plumbed all depths, and taken the measure of all philosophies.

Later on, the period of cocksureness will pass, and he will wonder at his past temerity. But, until that happy time comes, you may be sure that his is no ordinary mind, and that if no one else is ready to solve the affairs of life for all and sundry, he is there to try his prentice-hand, and achieve it.

Now, all this naturally makes him a talker. He will not let his light remain under a bushel

for long. He feels that he has something to say that the world ought to know, and he is going to say it at length. And he does say it, and say it again.

In this dominant mood you may sit upon him hard and long, but his india-rubber nature will spring back again. He is irrepressible.

Moreover, there is no small ambition about the young mind which sets him on to talk. He has the idea that there exists a conspiracy to suppress him, and he is not very far wrong, so he is determined that he will not be relegated to a back-seat, when there are brilliant foot-lights to set him off.

Besides, is it not by means of the tongue that great successes are achieved in life ? Along the thoroughfare of speech lies the way of greatness. He need not live long in the world to learn this noxious lesson, and he learns it to the world's cost.

" Youth is always ready with words," wrote Bismarck, commenting on the young Prince Frederick's criticisms of one of his decisions.

As it is with youth, so it is with *old age*, for there we find another prime offender. Extremes meet with a vengeance. It is a second childhood.

The babblings of old age are familiar to us all, babblings of the remote past mostly, for this is all that the poor memory can recall. The newer events of life have evaporated, for they have never deeply dinted the memory. But what is recalled of the early past is poured out with sad profusion, and is told again and again.

But how sad and tragic it all is, this poor

wreck of humanity who has outlived his powers, rambling on everlastingly about trifles!

We must not get impatient with him and his old world stories, for we may be like him ourselves some day. And if it pleases him to catch you by the lappet, and tell you things you have often heard before, listen and listen again, for you are giving an old man pleasure, the only pleasure left to him, of fighting his battles over again. We listen to the prattlings of a child, and like to hear them. Well, here is another child; let him prattle too.

Perhaps we ought not to call the old man an offender, for no offence is meant, and, with right-minded people, no offence is taken. It is a natural infirmity.

There is one class of offenders which I hesitate to advance, but concerning which the world is generally agreed; I mean *the female sex.*

Rightly or wrongly, it is the universal conviction that women talk excessively, and I am bound in fairness to say so. Of course, not all women, and perhaps not most, but certainly many. And in a general way we may say that a woman can give large odds to a mere man, and beat him, in the game of speech.

Why it should be so is not altogether difficult to see.

For one thing, the ordinary woman has more leisure to fill than man has, and has therefore more time for talk. It provides a vent for the superfluous energy of many. Unfortunately, much talk cannot be wise talk, and in the letting off of steam somebody is apt to be scalded.

Then she is, as a rule, more sociable than man; at least, she seems to depend more on Society than do most of the other sex. And Society spends much of its time in talk and chatter. How can one be sociable without it? And where there is much confidential talk, there will be much revealed which had better not be ventilated. Once throw open the doors of the lips, and nobody knows what may march out.

It may be, too, that she has a more nimble tongue than man, more loosely hung, and therefore more easily manipulated. Certainly, she can say more on small subjects than a man, and has more facility in saying it. She gets less tired, too, with long exertions. I do not say this to the discredit of woman, how can I? but as a simple fact which is more to her credit than to her discredit. But all powers have the defect of their qualities, and lend themselves to abuse. The corruption of the best is the worst. And just as a spirited young horse may be an excellent possession, when well handled, but may become a calamity if it takes the bit in its mouth and runs away, so is it with the tongue.

Let us see what the world's comment is on the question of female offenders. Fortunately for our subject, it has had much to say, and not always of that unkind nature which the world is too ready to adopt when it disapproves. We may not rule out sober critics.

Dr. John Brown was not a harsh judge of anyone, but he seems to have been sorely tried by some of these offenders, to judge by his unwonted fire. This is what he wrote :—

"Pray do not ask me to be civil to a loquacious woman. I like woman to speak, and to speak a good deal; nothing except sleep becomes her better. But a talking woman is an awful judgment, and a mystery, and an oppression."

Dr. Johnson was once asked why he was not oftener invited to dine out; as much, in fact, as Garrick was. He replied that it was because great lords and ladies do not like to have their mouths stopped.

To St. Francis de Sales it was once said:—

"I don't know what makes the women flock around you so much, for it seems to me that you never say much to them."

"Do you call it nothing," he replied, "to let them talk as much as they will to me? Most assuredly, they care more for ears to listen, than words to reply. They talk enough for us both, and probably they come to me because I am such a good listener. Nothing is so delightful to great talkers as a patient listener."

The good Bishop did not say whether he enjoyed the female inundations.

On another occasion, we are told by his biographer, he was surrounded by a whole troop of ladies clamouring for some solution of their difficulties, to whom the Bishop replied:—

"Ladies, I will gladly answer all your questions if you will answer one of mine:—What is to happen in an assembly where everybody talks and nobody listens?"

Probably, one of the most sweeping condemnations of the over-talking woman was given by one of the old Rabbis. He wrote:—

"There were showered down upon the earth twelve bushels of Chit-chat, and nine of the baskets were appropriated by women."

There must have been a sly twinkle in Buxtorf's learned eye, when he suggested, as a probable derivation of our first mother's name of Eve, that it came from the root meaning to talk.

Richter could praise as well as blame in strong language, not the less strong because he was such a master of words, and he wrote this of the two kinds of women :—

"The most intelligent women are, often, silent women. Those are for the most part the greatest thinkers who are the least talkers ; as frogs cease to croak when light is brought to the water's edge."

O. W. Holmes, in his Autocrat of the Breakfast Table, aptly describes the virtues of a woman's silence :—

"Better too few words from the woman we love, than too many. While she is silent Nature is working for her. While she talks she is working for herself. Love is sparingly soluble in the words of men ; therefore they speak much of it. But one syllable of woman's speech can dissolve more of it than a man's heart can hold."

Sometimes, a frailty secures a sort of immortality by being inscribed upon a tombstone.

A Miss Arabella Young is thus perpetuated by some malicious foe :—

"Here lies, returned to clay, Miss Arabella Young,
Who, on the first of May, began to hold her tongue."

Neither is the accusation against the garrulity of women a mediæval or a modern one, for the

ancients were of the same opinion, and did not hesitate to say so. For instance, Sophocles gave it as his opinion that "Silence is an ornament for women." While Euripides wrote that "Silence and sobriety of mind, and remaining quietly at home, are for women a most beautiful thing." By which it is evident that such qualities were not in those days the ordinary endowment of women. It would seem, too, from St. Paul's words against women talking in the Church, that they were a little disorderly in their speech within the sanctuaries, and needed suppression.

The pity of much that is written on character is, that, while the defect is chronicled at large, and more than a little caustically, the virtue is passed over in silence, being taken for granted. So it is with the comments about garrulous women and silent ones. It is the former who are pilloried, while the gracious, silent type has scarcely a word of praise. It is hardly fair.

It is curious how the too free gift of speech is *identified with certain trades ;* as if the nature of the occupation had something to do with the tendency.

Barbers are supposed to be special offenders against economy of speech ; and, indeed, always have been since history began to be written.

"How shall I shave you, O King ?" a barber once asked King Archelaus, as he was putting the towel around his royal neck.

"Silently," was the reply.

A martyred barber, such as Plutarch tells us of, must have struck terror into many hearts. It seems that the tyrrany of Dionysius was

being discussed in a barber's shop, and his harshnesses were freely referred to. The barber's share of the conversation was simply to say:—

"Fancy your saying this to me, who have my razor at his throat most days."

The saying came to the King's ear, and the too garrulous barber was promptly crucified.

But, after all, these poor barbers were only following the recognized method of their business, in trying to be agreeable to their customers by saying pleasing things, and imparting spicy news.

This craving to be the first to tell good or bad news brought one Athenian barber into a terrible plight. He happened to hear from a slave that the Athenians had met with a great reverse, and immediately ran through the city to impart the startling tidings. But he obtained a reward not according to his taste, for the magistrates, hearing of the barber's report, put him on the rack to secure further news. By and bye, it was confirmed, and the city was so appalled that the poor man on the rack was left there forgotten.

Those who are familiar with country town life will remember the old institution of the Cheap Jack. His patter, often amusing and clever, is part of his stock-in-trade, and on his freedom of smart delivery depends his success. No man, perhaps, shews us so graphically the possibilities of the human tongue, and comes nearer to the solution of perpetual motion. And when the rush for the crockery, the stuffs, the pills, or the ointments comes, it is due to the words rather than to the quality of the goods. But he is not

confined to England; he is found all the world over.

A good deal depends, of course. on the temptation to talk unduly, and it will be found, I think, that the greatest talkers are those who work together rather than as solitaries. Such a solitary as the working cobbler, who, alone in his little shed, works away energetically, is usually a silent thinker rather than a garrulous talker. But gather together men in workshops, and the tongue will be found to clack freely. Then again, such men as weavers, who work to the accompaniment of noisy machinery, and if they talk at all must shout, do not find their trade conducive to easy conversation. Moreover, some trades depend on great concentration of mind, and it is difficult to talk and work at the same time. For a slip in a measurement or in a delicate manipulation of any kind, would mean a heavy penalty for the luxury of speech, and must therefore be foregone.

Probably, all men would be talkers more or less, were the temptations to talk of equal force.

Among the professions, redundancy of talk is often found. For some professions are actually dependent on the use of speech, and are operated through the mouth. Words are their counters, and with them they carry on their work. It is not to be wondered at that they should sometimes overdo the use of words.

Barristers may easily be offenders, for temptations come to them every day. Once on his feet he is in constant danger, unless he

be of a nervous temperament, and anxious therefore to sit down as quickly as possible. But, given great self-possession, and a great cause, he will find it hard, when he has said all, to stop. The temptation to go on presses him sore, and only a man of mind and tact knows when the cup is just full. Besides, there may lurk within him a desire not only to win his case, which is bound to be paramount, but to cut a fine figure, and to make an impression on the world. The opportunity to distinguish himself is bound to assert its power.

Doctors differ largely, as might be expected, but the more popular ones are, as one can easily see, the conversationalists. The cleverer practitioner, with less conversational power but with a single eye for his work, will not be quite the same social success ; but the few who value merit and skill will consult him in preference to the man of only words and manners.

Perhaps, however, the greatest offenders, and the most unpardonable, are the *clergy and the preachers.* What may be passed over in other professions becomes a sin with the minister, since he is supposed to be moved by finer motives. He is no less frail, unfortunately, and falls into a pitfall just as easily as the rest. But his fall is certainly greater, and the results more disastrous.

It is a serious thing for an ambassador to hide his King, and to interpose himself ; it is still more serious for the minister of the King of Kings to do it. And, once he begins to show off his fine periods, and his swelling tones, he

stands among the condemned. He is out of his proper element. He becomes no longer a preacher, but a prattler.

Even when the motive is pure, he can easily offend against the proprieties of speech.

He may go on talking after he has really finished, being moved by the anxiety not to say something, but to fill up time.

He may discourse on a topic which he does not fully understand, and of which it is therefore impossible to make a good sermon.

He may weave words as if they were garlands, and be more eager to match the verbal colours, and to keep the artistic shape, than to convey any positive truth.

And he may even be run away with by his words, his tongue sounding and resounding, and his will, feelings, and mind wholly detached from the verbal flow. His hearers are, of course, not taught; only splashed.

And, even when he succeeds in talking sense, he may overflow too profusely, and talk too long, tiring out his people. The fact that he can go on is no proof that their attention will continue. And if he falls back upon the higher inspiration as an excuse, it may be just as well to remember that when we cease to inspire interest we can lay no claim to any inspiration worth having. When fatigue begins, profit ends.

The truth is that the man who speaks is the least important of all in a sermon; what lies at the back of him stands first. His truth, his Master, the souls of men, are of far more importance than the channel which carries the message.

There is one profession, if we may call it so, which of all employments is the most noxious, and which depends on the free use of words. I mean that of *the demagogue*. He is indeed a master of words, and of nothing else, except an insane hatred of all that is respectable. His weapons are words of a lurid type, words many, words fierce, words violent. In and out he goes among the simple, hurling his messages against the hated opposition, and fanning a fire which is warranted to burn and blister. Work he disdains; he prefers talking. And much of the world's unrest is due to these mischievous firebrands, who are only happy when they can set class against class.

It is of these that Carlyle speaks:—

"My friends, if you can find nobody to take care of your affairs but the expertest talker, it is all over with your affairs, and you. Talk never yet could guide any man's, or nation's, affairs; nor will it yours, except towards the *Limbus Patrum*, where all talk."

We all believe in the merits of free speech, and would not limit any man's right to talk, but, surely, we ought not to allow any tongue to endanger the public welfare and to sow discords. Fire is good within limits, but when it is used to fire ricks, and burn down houses, the law steps in to forbid and punish. When freedom degenerates into license, it is high time to apply the extinguisher.

An offender who prevails amongst us largely is the *politician* who, filling an important place in the community, is apt at times to become a

nuisance. Legislation is not always advanced by much talk, and is not likely to be. But so long as politics absorb the mind's interest, we may not expect a great moderation in the verbal output. For not all see that it is possible to quench thought and truth by superabundance in exposition, and that truth is better served by moderation and silence. So long, however, as the politician is only concerned with himself and his party, so long will he keep himself and his cries before the public ear. This unmeasured talk is a calamity which, by heat and rancour, tries to compel sensible minds to take wrong views. Most minds work better alone, without all this voluble prompting.

It is curious how volubility *runs along national grooves*, and how largely it depends on temperature and latitude. Our northern nations are often taciturn, and the further north we go the more reserved men seem to be. But go further south, and the tongue gets looser and looser as we descend. Your Italian will expend twenty words in giving you a direction, when an Englishman would do it all with a gesture. For the temperature seems to act on the temperament, and where the feelings are quick and nervous, the words gather fulness and speed. It is well to remember this, for what is a national peculiarity is not to be condemned as if it were a personal one. What in an Englishman is a defect can hardly be deemed so in a Spaniard or a Brazilian.

CHAPTER XII.

MYSTIC SILENCE.

SILENCE plays such a fruitful part in all Mysticism that it must be represented in the gallery of silence. It may not be quite easy to represent it adequately, but, easy or hard, we must do our best. To omit it would be fatal to all completeness.

Who is this Mystic? Is he the man with the closed eye, introspective, turning his gaze from the outer world, that he may see within the better? Or is he the man with the closed mouth, who prefers to let God speak, and reverently keeps silence before Him that he may listen the better? Is he not both?

But who is this Mystic?

To take him generally, he is a cosmopolitan, of no special nationality. He is at home in all countries, East and West. Perhaps he is less familiar in the prosaic West, although he is far from unknown there. In fact, he pervades the world at large, and hails all Mystics as his fellows.

Neither does he, as a Mystic, necessarily bear the impress of any religion, for all religions claim him. He may be a Mahommedan, as he may

be a Buddhist. Protestant and Roman Catholic have a share in him alike. For Mysticism is a spirit, rather than a creed. It is the attitude which distinguishes him, and which marks him off as a Mystic. It is a method, a principle, a way.

Not that the Mystic is a vague, nebulous being, driven about by whim and fancy, a man of visions and dreams. His outlines are much more definite and clear-cut than this. You may pick him out of the crowd easily enough, and he can pick out, without difficulty, his fellows.

For the Mystic has always the same *goal*—God. To reach God, to be in touch with Him, to be united to Him, is his overmastering ambition. Compared with this, all else sinks into comparative insignificance. For this, he is willing to forego all, undergo all, sacrifice all. He may have a different name for God, but we need not postulate a different God, and indeed must not, unless names are vital. All Mystics agree that there is one Great and High God.

So too the *road* of the Mystic is the same; the way of self-denial and faith. Repentance is an essential, and he who goes not down can never ascend. There is ever a dark subway, through which we must pass on our upward way, and without the sense of desolation, which all feel who realize something of the horrors of sin, there can be no progress. But, then, with the vision of a merciful, welcoming God, no darkness can last, and the pilgrim who goes on in faith must soon come into the open, with the blue heavens above him, and the white

road beneath his feet. To a Christian Mystic, certainly, the journey cannot be long or doubtful.

The Mystic *creed*, so far as it goes, is the same. A merciful God, omnipotent as He is merciful, waiting with open arms to receive men and to press them to His heart. A wise God too, Who casts His bright beams upon man's soul, to enlighten him, and to pick out the roadway for his wandering footsteps. Yea, better (and here we come into the very *Sanctum Sanctorum* of Mystic truth), a God Who comes into the spirit of the worshipper as immanent and resident. There He works, and shines, and burns, doing glorious things for the poor helpless spirit.

The Mystic *method* too is the same, to pave the way for the great incoming, to remove hindrances, and to open doors.

The Mystic *expectations*, also, are the same. Believing in a direct communication with his God, he expects God's Spirit to deal directly with his soul. The old circuitous methods which depend on priests and formulas he abandons. There is no need for them in his Mystic system. For he considers it a libel on the loving-kindness of his Father to imagine that there can be any difficulty in approaching Him, or that He necessarily exacts laborious efforts, or compels men to take needless and circuitous routes to find Him. He removes hindrances ; not casts them up before our feet. And instead of evading His creatures, He runs to meet them, and throws open wide His arms to take them in. And when He comes, He brings His glory with Him.

I am not writing a chapter on Mysticism, simply on one aspect of it, but this much I must say, that while all Mysticism agrees in its main features, and may be found in any faith, it does not follow that the religions with which it is associated are alike true. There are religions which no Christian can accept, and while he believes that the true Mystic rises above a false religion, or gets away from what is erroneous in it, he holds that he would be yet a better Mystic if his religion were purer. The best of men may be hampered by wrong associations, and while intuition is a real method of conceiving truth, its findings are all the firmer when buttressed and made sure by a religion which is wholly true, and intellectually satisfactory.

Now, silence to a Mystic is essential, and plays a large part in his progress; indeed without it none of his blessings could come.

For silence opens the inner avenues, and keeps them open; it prepares the surface of the spirit for the impress of the coming revelations, like the prepared paper for the reception of light through the photographic lens; it makes the soul quiet and still, and so enables the Divine reflections to fall undisturbed; it lays bare the inner spirit to meet the Spirit of God, and to come into fruitful contact.

There is a story told of St. Louis of France, who, on his way to the Crusade, turned aside to visit the holy Giles in his convent at Perugia. They duly met, embraced, and embraced again, but spoke never a word.

Puzzled beyond measure, the simple Franciscans said to Giles :—

"That was the King of France, and not a word did you say to him."

"'Our spirits spoke," replied Giles.

It was the Mystic silence, which all Mystic souls understand, and translate into Mystic communications.

But let us try to estimate more in detail what this silence signifies, and how good it is that the soul in communication with God should be silent before Him.

Does not our Lord know what we want without words ? Are words essential to Him ? And when we labour to express our thoughts and desires in prayer, is it because He would not understand us if we did not so labour ? We shall not hesitate about our answers to these questions. We know that our verbal variations and profusions are quite unnecessary. In certain circumstances they may even be an insult. They may be necessary for us in the disburdening of our hearts, and to clear our own minds, but not for Him. A prayer is not the less a prayer because it is launched forth in thought and desires only.

We ask again :—

May not words be a snare to the praying one ? They need not be, but they often are. We may be quite satisfied to utter many words, and be content if there is a goodly measure of them. To expect to be heard for much speaking is not uncommon. The fact is that words, emptily used, are as idle as the winds. And if the

words cheat us, they become positively noxious. But the silent prayer is less open to this delusion, since it drops the dangerous medium, and moves independently of it. We may use words, and think that they are really laden with a rich freight of petition, but in the silent prayer all goes to thought and desire. Silence is an excellent detective.

Moreover, the free use of words may make prayer onesided, as if we had to do all, forgetting that our part is the least. God's part is the most important. We speak, that God may speak by His Spirit. It is what He says to us which matters, and prevails. And there is a danger that the babble of our own voices may drown the voice of God. We must not think that we have prayed, if all that we have done is to say our prayers. Has He spoken back to us ? Have we given Him the chance to speak back, and made a silent space for His voice to fill ? Or, have we hurried away when our prayers have been offered, satisfied with having done our duty ? This is a fatal onesidedness which vitiates the devotion of many.

And words may even be distracting in prayer, creating a sense of effort and strain which may easily destroy the communion of spirits. We may be so keen to express ourselves clearly, and to order our petitions in good phrases, that the heart is quite diverted from prayer's real purpose. The struggle not to be slovenly may drain away all the spiritual energy. But silence is simpler, and leaves the inner spirit free to do its proper work, and to really pour

itself into devotional moulds. Silence helps concentration, the true focussing of the heart, and the uplifting of the thoughts.

With these and similar arguments the Mystic justifies his silences and continues them, believing that more blessings lie in the paths of silence than in the paths of speech.

Of course, it is quite possible to overdo even silence, and, by making it too absolute he may mar his prayers even as by overmuch speech. For words have a necessary place, even if inferior, and it is by the judicious mingling of silence and speech that the prayer is perfected.

And silence must needs be carefully watched, lest it become too blank and unintelligent. Vital silence is no flat dulness which acts as a mere sounding board, unreceptive and lethargic, but an active, breathing reality, which is alert in its desires and receptiveness.

It is difficult, and, with some, well nigh impossible, to explain the place of silence in God's plans, but, understood or not, it has a definite place.

Let us see the system at work, for, after all, it is the illustration which gives a fact reality and life to our apprehension. Lay figures may be beautifully shaped and clothed, but we prefer to see some life which can make the bosom heave and the eye sparkle under the pressure of deep emotion.

The literature of Mysticism is large, and the illustrations many, and we can but cull a few flowers here and there, like a nosegay from a large and well-furnished garden.

We will turn first to the Ancient Mysteries, and see the place which silence had in them, especially in their secret ceremonial.

It was considered necessary, it seems, to put the initiate into a becomingly solemn state of mind, and everything was so arranged that a great awe should be induced.

Thus, in the higher stages of initiation, there came the solemn harvesting of a shoot of corn in the deepest silence. The mysteries of life and death were supposed to be well set forth in nature, and the Divine symbolized. To the ancients silence was the medium in which God moved, and in which He wrought His great works.

Sir William Ramsay quotes Dr. Dietrich as giving among the preparatory instructions to the Mithraic Initiates these words :—

" Lay thy right finger on thy mouth, and say, Silence ! Silence ! Silence ! Symbol of the living, imperishable God."

And again he declares that silence was even addressed in prayer :—

" Guard me, Silence."

It is thought by many that some of the eminent early Christian leaders had possibly been initiated before they became Christians, and that this is revealed by the turns of speech found in their writings. It would be just like them to throw their new truth into the old forms, especially in dealing with those who possessed the key in their own experiences.

Was it so with St. Paul, for many of his phrases are common to the Mysteries ?

Ignatius, in his Letters, again and again insists on the necessity and power of silence, as something peculiarly sacred and divine, and declares that all great things proceed from it.

St. Augustine had evidently personal acquaintance with the Pagan practices of his time, and drew largely on his past experience in pressing the claims of the truth. Neoplatonism he knew well from within.

The following extract from his Confessions contains a glowing eulogy on silence. He and his mother, Monica, were spending their last days together at Ostia, and thus he writes of the hours "lost in sweet communion":—

"When in one's body the storm of the flesh is silenced, when the voices of land and sea are hushed, and the canopy of heaven is silent; when the soul is mute within itself, and, forgetting self, rises above itself; when the dreams and fancies of the imagination are silent; when every tongue, and every sense, and all that is perishable, is silent; and when the Creator speaks, not through any of these, but speaks Himself directly, and we thus hear His voice, not from any man's lips, and not from the lips of angels, not in thunder and darkness, and not in unintelligible parable, but hear Him whom we adore in these things, Himself alone apart from them all, even as we have risen above them, and, in rapturous flights of thoughts, have reached the eternal wisdom which is highly exalted above them all; if then this condition could be a lasting one, and all other thoughts and imaginings of a

different nature could be banished for ever, and the beholder were thus carried away, consumed, swallowed up in joy, and the soul's yearning satisfied, would not then this be the moment to which these words apply, 'Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord'?"

Sir Henry Breashed, in his interesting and original book, The Development of Religious Thought in Ancient Egypt, thus writes of the Mystic silence of those ancient devotions :—

"In the highest period of Egyptian religious thought, the period preceding sacerdotalism and decay, we get something akin to Mysticism. God is alluded to as 'The Lord of the Silent.'"

"Thou sweet well, for him that thirsteth in the desert; it is closed to him that speaks; but is open to him that is silent. When he who is silent comes, lo! he finds the well."

Dean Inge quotes Hierotheus, the Mystic, as writing this eulogium on the power of Mystic silence :—

"To me it seems right to speak without words, and understand without knowledge. This I apprehend to be nothing but mysterious silence, which destroys consciousness, and dissolves forms. Seek therefore silently, and mystically, that perfect union with the Archgood."

The excellence of silence in the development of the soul is well set forth in the story of John Tauler's spiritual uplifting.

One day there sat among his hearers, Nicolas of Basel, the founder of that spiritual body, "The Friends of God." Nicolas was not

well pleased with Tauler's sermon, and told him plainly that he was "still but a man of books, a mere Pharisee."

Tauler's humility stood the test, and he sought his friend's spiritual help. Startling indeed was the prescription, that for two years he was to abstain from preaching, and, laying aside all his books, was to seek light in the loneliness of his cell.

Followed by the mockery of his friends, Tauler obeyed the counsel, and went into solitude and silence.

At the close of his discipline he returned to Strasburg, and once again stood before a great crowd of hearers, glad to see their favourite preacher back once more. But his feelings were too much for him, and his utterance was so choked by tears that he broke down, and left the pulpit with his message undelivered.

At the suggestion of Nicolas, Tauler went back into silence again, to overcome the last remnants of self-love which had not been yet eradicated. And this time all went well, and when he spoke to his people, he spoke as a free man the truth of God and with glorious effectiveness. God had done for Tauler in the silence what could never have been done in the crowd.

Henceforth, Tauler's message to his people was the excellence of silence. This is how he dispensed his prescription to those who would fain grow faster in spiritual excellences :—

"The third hindrance is without; our thoughtless mixing in society; our useless and

aimless chatter ; our uncalled for intermingling in all sorts of things. Is it not thus that we deprive ourselves of confidential intercourse with the Lord and His sweetness ? "

Quaintly does he describe Mystic souls, as those who " do not trouble themselves with much talking."

And all the Mystics strike the same note.

Miguel Molinos, at one time, was the accepted teacher of high and low. Popes, princes, and nobles, sat at his feet to learn the Mystic way. But later, his sun was eclipsed by the malice of men, who feared that his influence might sap theirs. And so, with trumped up charges and unscrupulous ways, they rested not until the prison doors closed upon him. But the sweet savour of his teaching lingered on, and still counts for much with spiritual souls.

When we examine his statements concerning the priestly system of his days, we are not surprised that those in authority should close his mouth. They could not love the man who could teach such a doctrine as this :—

" If God may be met in the silence of the believer's soul, where is there room for the priest ? "

He wrote a little book called The Spiritual Guide, which has brought light into many a soul, and which is the treasured companion of many to-day. Here is set forth his Mystic faith :—

" Enter into thyself by means of internal recollection."

" Walk with a firm faith, and a holy silence, dying in thyself."

"Oh! how great a work will it be for thy soul to be whole hours together in prayer, dumb, resigned, and humble, without acting, knowing, or desiring to understand anything."

Internal recollection he defines as "faith and silence in the presence of God":—

"Thou oughtest to go to God in prayer, that thou mayest deliver thyself wholly into the Hands of God with perfect resignation, exerting an act of faith, believing thou art in the Divine presence; afterwards settling in that holy repose with quietness, silence, and tranquillity."

"There are three kinds of silence. The first is of words, the second of desires, the third of thoughts. By not speaking nor desiring, and not thinking, one arrives at the true and perfect Mystical silence, where God speaks to the soul, communicates Himself to it, and, in the abyss of its own depth, teaches it the most perfect and exalted wisdom."

"Thou art to keep thyself in this Mystical silence, if thou would'st hear the sweet and divine voice."

"Rest in the Mystical silence, and open the door that so God may communicate Himself unto thee, unite with thee, and then form thee unto Himself."

Thomas à Kempis strikes the true Mystic note here and there, although he is not counted among the pure Mystics. He, too, insists that the eager soul must go into silence, to hear aright the voice of her Beloved:—

"Often am I wearied with much reading, often with much hearing. In Thee is all I wish,

and all I desire. Let the learned hold their peace. · Let all creatures be silent in Thy sight. Speak Thou alone to me."

"In solitude and silence," he writes again, "the devout soul advances, and learns the hidden truths of the Scriptures."

"Blessed is the soul which heareth the Lord speaking within, and receiveth the words of consolation from His lips. Blessed are the ears that feel the breath of the Divine whispers, heeding not the whispers of the world. Truly blessed are the ears which listen to the inner voice of truth, and not to any voice which soundeth without."

So Suso wrote:—

"Come thou, my soul, collect thyself from all external things into the tranquil silence of the inner man."

Madame Guyon shall be our next witness, and no Mystic has the gift of clearness in greater abundance. Bossuet did his best to beat down her defences, and to overwhelm her with his boisterous learning. Had her faith been less simple, and her experiences less convincing, he might have succeeded, but faith has her reasons, and we are permitted to overhear some of them.

One of Bossuet's charges was that she did not pray at all; that she undervalued the necessity of prayer. And she answers:—

"So far from the truth is it that persons who have experienced the blessings of pure and perfect love cease to pray, that it is much nearer the truth to say that they pray always. Certain it is that the prayer is always in their

hearts, although it may not be spoken. We sometimes call this the prayer of silence. It is perhaps a prayer too deep for words."

"His presence becomes so natural, that it would be impossible not to have it. It becomes habitual to the soul. Its prayer is all silence."

"Two classes of persons are silent; the one because they have nothing to say; the other because they have too much. The latter are silent from excess, not from want."

"Outward silence is extremely necessary," she explains, "for inward silence, and it is impossible to acquire inward silence without having a love for silence and solitude."

But a Mystic's was a perilous career in those days, for lights were low throughout the Christian world, and any that dared to glow more brightly than the average must suffer the penalty. It was a reflection on the Church at large, and could not be tolerated. And so, accused of madness, or heresy, or hypocrisy, they were hurried to prison and torture.

Even their silence was an insult. They might keep step with the religious crowd; they might even lag behind a little; but to outstep and press on was positively indecent, and deserved a prison at least. And this fate Madame Guyon brought on herself from the purblind ecclesiastics of her day.

The study of the Mystics is, for the most part, the study of the individual; the shining of a light here and there in the darkness. And it can hardly be anything else, when the deeper

experiences are, in their very nature, incommunicable. But there is one exception, which is notable enough to demand attention from the student, that of the Friends, or, as they are familiarly known by the outside world, the Quakers. Here is a whole Christian section, whose distinguishing mark is silence. They are Mystics pure and simple, the disciples of the Inner Light, strict adherents of the practice of silent worship, and in them silence is reduced to a system.

George Fox, their founder, stood for reality. Impatient with the formal externalism of the time in which he lived, he insisted on the modes of the spirit, and, scouting the human, sought to promote the divine. No doubt, some of his methods were eccentric, and his insistences were at times highly irregular and provocative, but there are few who would now doubt the fact that there was a method in his madness. He stood for truth and righteousness. Red-hot men are never very popular, especially when they violate proprieties, and offend susceptibilities, and he was no exception. But nothing could daunt his intrepid spirit; he just went on careless of personal consequences. The strange thing was that the man of the silent worship should have so let out with bitter and uncurbed tongue, against the "Steeple Houses," the parsons, and the powers that be.

To-day, however, he and his system have received fairer play, and we are getting to see that, in spite of his extravagances, he was right in many of his contentions, and especially in

his efforts to bring the Christian world back to the work of the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity. We owe more than we know to George Fox and his successors.

Let us dwell a little on the Mystic faith of the Friends, and especially scrutinise the place of silence in their worship and creed.

We cannot read many of their writings without perceiving that they have an exceeding distrust of words as a medium of communication with God. They believe that words generate a spirit of forwardness, unreality, and self-energy. It seems to them that words are more likely to block the way than to open it, to shut out God's Spirit than to let Him in. They know, as we know, how satisfied we are apt to be with the mere spoken word, and how that then the word is all.

Prayer, they feel, is something infinitely deeper than the framework of it, no matter how voluble and extended the verbal communication may be.

Then, it is clear that the Friends have an exalted notion of what communion with God should be, that it should be the contact of Spirit with spirit, and that there should be nothing between. They believe that the Holy Ghost so enters into our inner being as to create definite impressions for our earthly guidance, and that no matter is too small or insignificant for Him to help. They expect that upon their spirits visions of the Divine should flash power and beauty. They lay themselves out to receive in faith these Divine

upliftings and inspirations. They are satisfied with nothing less, and refuse to cheat their souls with mere counterfeits and shams. To fall short of this deep personal communion with God they consider an unspeakable loss and sin.

The Friends have also a profound distrust of themselves and their own powers, so much so, that they deny to self any sufficiency. Self is very cunning in invention, but self must move aside, and let the Spirit work alone. There must be no mixing of self with the Spirit of God, and, wherever the attempt is made, they believe that superstition and idolatry are sure to follow. They desire no roving imaginations. Legalism is the soul's deadly foe, and, since it is always ready to find a footing in the spirit, they make it their business to eject it, and to rely on the Spirit alone.

The grand antidote of the Quaker to these many temptations which wait upon the Christian is silence, whereby he can alone securely and certainly wait upon God, and "worship Him in spirit and in truth" in the inner sanctuary of the heart.

But this silence is "not only the outward silence of the body, but also the inward silence of the mind from all its imaginations."

For the Christian is a scholar, who must be quiet and give his Master time and opportunity to speak, and not be ever addressing Him. He is a servant, who ought not to deafen his King with discourse, even though it were in the praises of Him, unless he would be accounted impertinent and impudent.

There is no true waiting on God, they insist, until there comes a cessation of the natural part of our natures, until self is denied, outwardly and inwardly, and until we take up the attitude of passive dependence. And silence is the expression of all this.

So, with great consistency, the Friends meet in silent assembly, practise silent family prayer, and carry the silent attitude into every department of their spiritual concerns.

But when their hearts have become saturated with Divine life, and they are steadily moved by Him, then they break silence, and say what is given them. They speak only when it is safe to speak. And when they have said God's say, then they rigidly stop. Until the speaking moment comes silence must, and does, prevail, yet not idle silence, but the silence of faith, adoration, and expectation.

Robert Barclay, who was the literary apostle of the Friends, and who shaped into finished English the messages of George Fox, and was, moreover, the philosopher of the movement, thus describes his first experience of a Quakers' Meeting :—

"When I came into the silent assemblies of God's people, I felt a secret power amongst them which touched my heart, and as I gave way to it, I found the evil weakening in me, and the good raised up."

There is, of course, much that others than Friends cannot accept, such as their rejection of a Ministry, of the outward Sacraments, and of the subjection of the Bible to their inner

enlightenment, but with their practice of silence we have much sympathy. Silence has its place as well as speech, and, without it, we may lose ourselves in formalities and superstitions. Their doctrine of the Inner Light is one for which the Church should be thankful to them for having rescued. It had well-nigh dropped out of most minds. In fact, whatever makes for greater reality and deeper spirituality is good, from whatever quarter it comes. Formality is the death of any religion.

One of the latest forms of Mysticism, with its attendant insistence on silence, comes from across the Atlantic ; an unexpected American product. It may not be altogether Christian Mysticism. It may indeed be largely tainted with Pantheism. But the Mystic features in this system are plainly recognisable, and are undoubted.

To those who can read their Christian faith into it, which is not difficult, there is much to be learned from a book like Trine's In Tune with the Infinite. But one must be careful to strain out the alien matter, and to supply what is lacking and left out. Even the texts from the Bible must be read with critical care, lest a wrong twist may have been given them by the quoter. And special care must be exercised to bring back the Personal into the lauded Universal, and not to let our holy faith be dissolved into a mere philosophy.

Now, silence plays a large place in this modern version of Mysticism, as, indeed, it is bound to do if it be real Mysticism at all. In the soul's submission to the Infinite, by which it lays

itself open to the inflow of the Divine life, and places itself at the Divine disposal, silence plays the leading part.

"Take yourself each day into the quiet," Trine counsels. "There in the quiet, alone with God, put yourself into the receptive attitude. Calmly, quietly, and expectantly, desire that the realization break in upon and take possession of your soul. You are on the mountain top, and God is speaking to you. Then, as you descend, take this realization with you."

Trine goes on to remind his readers that :—

"In the busy office, or in the noisy street, you can enter into the silence, by simply drawing the mantle of your thoughts about you, and realizing that there, and everywhere, the spirit of eternal life, love, wisdom, peace, power, and plenty, is guiding you, keeping, protecting, leading you. This is the spirit of continual prayer. This is to find Christ within."

Dresser is another American writer of the same school of Mystic thought; only more metaphysical and universalist. He frankly confesses that his "common-sense doctrines are intended to unite the wisdom of the ages with the later discoveries of the New Psychology."

"Our deepest life," he writes, "is a continuous incoming of renewing, sustaining power, welling up from the depths of the universe into the spirits of men, a continuous, divine communication engaged in the rearing of a soul."

Man's ambition should be to keep the soul at the top.

"The ideal of daily conduct is to maintain this inward repose, to keep it steadily and persistently in view, to regain it when we lose it, to have a calm inner centre, which is never disturbed."

"Find your centre," he says again, "learn to know your home in God, and what He is doing for you, and you can safely let the great world go on, and let nature's organism right all wrongs, and heal all hurts."

There is not much concrete Christian faith in all this, but, in spite of its vagueness, it carries a true message. It is for us who know better the fuller Christian truth to add the Personal God in Christ to all this.

Now see the part that silence plays in his scheme :—

"We are unaware of the power and value of a few moments of silence; yet it is in our periods of receptivity that we grow."

"Oftentimes, if the way be dark and we can get no help, it is better to cease all striving, and let the Power have us."

"Silence," he goes on to say, "invites the greatest power in the world, the one Power, the one Life. Let us be still, in the truest and greatest sense of the word, and feel the Power. It is the All in All."

To a Christian all this is familiar, even if we have failed to emphasize it, and we think our Christian way of putting it is better and sounder. But it is good to have our truths emphasized afresh, and from another point of view. It would be a pity to refuse the help

of even imperfect allies, if only to show us that many are groping for the same blessings that we are craving for ourselves. But we must be careful not to be drawn into a Maelström of error by the attractiveness of one item of a strange creed.

Emerson's philosophy is equally attractive, and equally universalist, and, with all its charms, must be watched carefully, lest, in our allegiance to the charms of his philosophy, we slip into a defective faith. This is what Professor William James points out in Emerson, that "he lets God evaporate into abstract Ideality; not a Deity in concrete, not a Superhuman Person, but the Immanent Divinity in things."

Maeterlinck, whose essays are full of appealing beauty, is also lacking in this definite note. It is not Christian; it skirts the edge only of our Christian position, and if it overlaps just a little here and there, it soon veers off into the nebulous and indefinite. It is just dreamingly beautiful, full of a haunting something, which charms and delights, we know not why. But when you seem to grasp something definite, it eludes you.

His ladders for ascent are made of gossamer, and when you try to grasp the rungs, they bend under your weight and let you down. Here again you must bring your substance of truth, if you would gain from his eminently suggestive words. He is good as an addendum, but bad to start from.

Let us dwell a little on his eulogies of silence,

of which he is almost the present day apostle.

" It is idle," he tells us, " to think by means of words that real communications can ever pass from one man to another. The moment we have something to say to one another, we are compelled to hold our peace. It is only when life is sluggish with us that we speak."

This revealing power of silence makes it dangerous to be silent with one whom you do not wish to know, or do not love.

" It is because we all of us know this sombre power, and its perilous manifestations, that we stand in so deep a dread of silence. We spend a good portion of our lives in seeking places where silence is not."

He reminds us of the day when we met our " first silence."

" You saw it rising from the unspeakable abysses of life, when all the secret jewels shone forth on you, and the slumbering truths sprang to life. Tell me whether silence then was not good and necessary."

Maeterlinck has but a mean opinion of those " who have no silence, and who kill the silence around them."

" To them it is not given to cross the zone of revelation, the great zone of the firm and faithful light. We cannot conceive what sort of man is he who has never been silent. It is to us as though his soul were featureless."

" We do not know each other yet," he said to a friend. " We have not yet dared to be silent together."

"Silence," was to him, "the angel of the supreme truth, the messenger that brings to the heart the tidings of the unknown."

"It is the sun of love, and it ripens the fruit of the soul as the sun of heaven ripens the fruits of the earth."

"The reservoirs of silence," he says again, "lie far above the reservoirs of thought."

To Maeterlinck silence is the test of all values :—

"As gold and silver are weighed in pure water, so does the soul test its weight in silence, and the words which we let fall have no meaning apart from the silence that wraps them round."

"Is it not silence," he asks, "that determines and fixes the savour of love? Deprived of it, love would lose its eternal essence and perfume. Who has not known these silent moments, which separate the lips to reunite the souls?"

It is no accident that silence should find its advocates all the world over, and that its associations should be of a religious type. Evidently, God's Spirit has been at work, even amongst those unconscious of Him, and sometimes amongst those who almost seem to deny Him. In the productiveness of silence all faiths meet, and unite.

The Indian Fakir sits for years together, seeking to concentrate his thoughts on God, feeling that no worthier object of contemplation is possible. And so, in silence, he awaits the Divine advent with all its subduing and uplifting power.

One is reported to have been silent for thirty years.

Another is said to have put a spoonful of soil between his lips, to have planted in it a grain of mustard seed, and to have kept his lips shut until the seed sprouted.

Dotted over India these silent recluses are found in caves and huts, with downcast eyes, and immovable as statues, trying to realise the Deity. No doubt, many of them make a trade of their silence, but not all. Many, however mistaken they may be, are honestly trying to find a way out for their burdened souls, and if some have sought in vain, we cannot but admire the silent energy of these devotees. It is for us to send those who, knowing the better way through Christ the Saviour of the world, will tell them of Him Who is mighty to save.

It has been a matter of wonder to many an Eastern who has visited the busy West to note the restlessness and strain of life, so different from their own. And if they see the failure of all this restless rush, we can but confess that they are right in their judgments of its inadequacy. The Western has but little rest, inside or out.

Professor William James, remarking on this Eastern love of silence, in his Talks to Teachers, quotes with approval the criticisms of some Hindoo students who visited his College :—

"More than one of them confessed to me that the sight of our faces, all contracted as

they are with the habitual American over-intensity and anxiety of expression, made on him a painful impression."

"I do not see," said one, "how it is possible for you to live as you do without a single minute in your day deliberately given to tranquillity and meditation. It is the invaluable part of our Hindoo life to retire for at least half an hour into silence, to relax our muscles, govern our breathing, and meditate on eternal things. Every Hindoo child is trained to this from a very early age."

Such a rebuke most of us deserve.

CHAPTER XIII.

SILENCE SYMBOLS.

THERE are some things which are better expressed by silence than by speech, and which owe their impressiveness to their silent utterance.

Here is the region of the symbol.

Not infrequently silence is the only possible medium of expression; words being barred by the very nature of the subject.

Here is the necessity of the symbol.

And where men seek to create a standing impression, a permanent flame rather than a flash, it is to the symbol that they turn.

Here is the wisdom of the symbol.

It is not well to make things too easy for the common mind, for polished speech is like an ice slope, and shoots the mind too quickly over its slippery surface. Most minds need to stay awhile, to deliberate and ponder, if impressions are to sink profitably into their depths.

Here is the special value of the symbol.

And so symbols have their rooted place in life, and are found in every age, in every clime, an integral part in the human scheme of things, never to be disestablished while the world lasts.

That silence should have its symbols too is not surprising when we think that it is only by their help that it can ever be silently expressed. It is the symbol which comes to our assistance when we wish to express silence without breaking it.

How it achieves its triumphs it is my business to describe in this chapter. We shall cover much ground, and catch glimpses of silent symbols at work in almost every department of the silent life. They may not all be equally expressive, and some may lack dignity. but for our present purpose, if they sufficiently illustrate silence, they will have served their turn.

The artist deals in symbols as part of his stock-in-trade, and his reputation rises or falls as he uses them well or ill. He may so fail to represent them that they are found to yield no manner of enlightenment. We say we do not know "what he is driving at," and so the purposed effect is lost, either through the use of a wrong symbol, or of a bewildering one. But if it is intelligible, if it appeals to our hearts, if it stirs the appropriate emotion, he has succeeded in his quest.

The silent pool, mirroring the overhanging trees, the cud-chewing kine, and the still clouds above, comes well within the meaning of our silence symbol when it stands out on the artist's canvas.

The silent ship on the silent ocean, far off from the sight and sound of the noisy breakers as they dash on the rocky shore, is representative too.

Luke Fildes' well known picture, The Doctor, teems with silent imagery; the silent patient almost drifting within the shadows, the father waiting in silent agony for the doctor's verdict, the doctor himself bending over the hand whose pulse he silently counts, are all full of suggestive silence.

There are pictures of autumn, like Millais' Chill October, which owe their force to the skill with which they suggest the silence of nature on her most silent day. Not a dead leaf stirs, nor a living one, no movement anywhere, just the most absolute stillness and silence.

And when a master-hand pourtrays the silent desert, with its great expanse, and not a soul in sight, the footprints in the sand being the only evidence of the life that passed in the less silent yesterday, it is the silence which appeals to us.

The sculptor still better moulds his silence symbol, for his medium, be it clay or marble, approaching as it does closer to life, lends itself better than the flat to symbolic treatment.

Go through the great Sculpture Galleries of one of our European capitals, and the dead masters will speak out of the dumb lips of their masterpieces. The hand of time has roughened them, the barbarism of the past has mutilated them, but they are still silent symbols of beauty and great thoughts. Standing in the midst of these silent forms, let but the mind linger over what is so nobly symbolised, and something rich and strong steals out and flows into our spirit to enrich it.

Some of us have stood beneath the great Sphinx of Ghizeh, with its base lapped by the sands of the Libyan desert, and, like many another who has questioned the Sphinx, we have pondered too. Over the Nile valley, due East, those inscrutable eyes are gazing, while over its shoulders lie the great Pyramids, and underneath is the Temple of the Sun-God. There, keeping watch and guard, it looks down on Asiatic and European ever coming and going, but yields its secret to none. Men tell us prosaically that it is the guardian of the valley, and that the IVth Dynasty Kings raised it as a finish to their great Tombs. Possibly so. But we wait for the secret still, as for many a thousand years men have waited before.

Is it a symbol of death this great Sphinx, "the Father of Terrors," as the Arabs call it?

Or is it the symbol of Resurrection, as others imagine? Who knows?

> "Even now, methinks, that those
> Dark heavy eyes, which close
> In such a stern repose,
> Seem burdened with some thought unsaid,
> And hoard within their portals dread
> Some fearful secret there,
> Which to the listening lark
> She may not whisper forth,
> Not even to the air."*

Perhaps, however, it is we who are the inscrutable ones, who project into the Sphinx our own inner questionings, and only imagine a secret. We cannot escape from our own shadows by getting closer to life's sphinxes,

*Quoted by George Rawlinson in his Ancient Egypt.

but only by turning to the true Sun-God, the Son of God Himself, and then our shadows fall behind us into invisibility.

Just as art has filled the world with its silence-symbols, so has religion, that holy region of the purest and most suggestive symbols of all.

For religion's appeals are universal, and take on a thousand forms, of which the symbol is not the least. It is easy to overdo its use, and the Church of Rome has disfigured religion's features with manifold wrappings of it, from many of which the meaning has long vanished.

It is for us, not to banish the symbol, but to disengage it from its dead forms, and to thin out some of its disguising thicknesses.

But let us examine some of the more familiar forms of religion's symbols, and see how they carry to our hearts some of its choicest facts.

Our churches are perfect museums of symbols, appealing in all their silent rigidity to the observant eye.

Up to the heavens is thrust the lofty spire, as if to bring God's earthly Temple nearer to Himself. " Lift up your hearts," it seems to say to us, and we do well to respond, "We lift them up unto the Lord." Sailors, out on the broad ocean, use the spire as a precious land-mark. Perhaps a few of them think of it also as a guide to that "haven where they would be," and where rough seas are not.

The chancel and transepts are also a silent symbol of the Cross. Sometimes, in ancient churches, the chancel is slightly turned to

silently symbolise the bent Head of the Crucified One.

In many Continental Churches we see thrust out from the pulpit, visible to preachers and people, a crucifix, a silent reminder that we must not "know anything . . . save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." No other message is worthy of that sacred spot but the Saviour and His great redemption, and the people are to test the preacher's words by that silent symbol of redemption. That is the best sermon in which Christ's Gospel is most fully set forth.

Hard by in many old pulpits stands the hour-glass, whose sands run steadily out before the eyes of all. "Time is pressing. Time is passing. Use your chances while you have them. Eternity is drawing nigh. Soon your sands of life will have run out. Be earnest. Be ready."

Perhaps also there is a suggestion of check in the running sands, a check on over-volubility, a check on a too insistent self, a check on a congregation's impatience for the sands to cease running. A very speaking symbol is this.

Outside the Church, over the Church porch, was often found that ancient parish clock, the sun dial, with its shadow creeping unerringly around the hour-table. Not for curiosity did it stand there. It was a guide to those who would fain be in time for the service, and a rebuke to those who were late. No doubt, we in these modern days have long outdistanced the sun dial, but in one of its features it never will be eclipsed, and that is in its silence.

That we miss in the tick-tack of the noisy clock, and the often unmelodious notice of the vanishing hours.

But the silent symbols of religion are not only associated with the outer church-life. The old Christian Catacombs bring us into the inner circle of symbolic things, for in them lies the dust of saints of old, many of whom suffered death for their faith. Upon their niche doors is inscribed their spiritual history in symbols clear and touching.

That they died in hope the roughly graven anchor testifies. That their death was a triumph, and not a defeat, the palm branch of victory declares. That they rested their souls on the best of foundations, is proved by the oft-repeated symbol of the lamb upon the shoulders of the good Shepherd. Upon Christ was all their hope for a bright and eternal future. In this Ark of Christ Himself they were borne over the rough seas of life to a harbour glorious and perpetual.

So, though dead, these brave Christians, young and old, "yet speak," and minister comfort to their brethren to-day. From the gloom of the Catacombs, along which many of us have wandered, lighted up by the wan, thin light of a guttering candle, deep consolations issue forth, congregated halo-lights of myriads of silent, shining souls.

We would fain be charitable to other faiths, but we look to them in vain for similar assurance. There are seekers many, but very few finders.

Outside Bombay are found Towers of Silence

in which the Parsees lay their dead. Around them, you see a fringe of hideous vultures sitting on the trees, awaiting their prey. The dead are laid within, and are then left for the vultures, the sun, and the rain to do their worst. The bones, dropping through prepared gratings, are collected and burned. Around these gruesome towers the sweet flowers blow, a violent contrast to the death which reigns within. Silent death, silent corruption, silent future, these are not much to nourish the faith of these worshippers of the sun, even if they treat the sun as a symbol of the great Fountain of Light. How much better to look to Him who is set before the world as "the brightness of His glory" and the true "Sun of Righteousness!"

But death is ever a favourite field for the operation of the symbol, just because it is so much in men's eyes and thoughts. What the world wants is not the representation of the skull and crossbones, but something poetical and pathetic in its appeal.

In the death-mask are reproduced the veritable features of the dead, minus the expression. That is indeed gone, but the form is true. You may, if you choose, imagine them asleep.

There is a little-known museum over one of the Chapels in Westminster Abbey, where, for a small payment, past royalties may be inspected as they were featured in life. You see them with their royal trappings around them, standing forth in a sort of death-life. They are symbols of the vanished dead produced from the death-mask.

In the sculptured tombs of by-gone ages we find symbols of the vanished. Parents and their children are depicted kneeling in prayer. Crusading warriors with their chain-armour and crossed feet lie there with closed eyes. Great statesmen look down on you as if on the platform of life, clutching their roll of notes, and raising a rigid hand. And the brand-new generations come and gaze, and try to spell out the symbolic message from the distant past before the spark had flown, and the lips had been closed in silent death.

Churchyards swarm with symbolic messages concerning the silent dead, until invention seems to have exhausted itself. The broken column, emblem of a life snapped off before its prime; the hour-glass whose sands have quite run out; the mourning figures supporting the great sepulchres, symbols of the broken hearts left behind; and a thousand others. Inscribed on the stones are the silent messages either sent after the silent dead, or wafted back to cheer the desolate, or to glorify the deceased in the eyes of strollers in the churchyard.

The living, too, have their ways of impressing silence on others, conveying by symbol the necessity, or wisdom, of holding the tongue, and these symbols have passed into the silence-speech of the world, intelligible to all.

Thus, who can misunderstand the finger pressed upon the lips as expressing warning or counsel? Accompanied by a monitory look or bent brows, it is irresistible.

In the Convent of St. Marco in Florence, for

ever to be associated with the memory of the martyred Savonarola, the famous Reformer before the Reformation, is a fresco known as "*Il Silenzio*," "Silence." Painted over a doorway, it conveys its own definite meaning to those who are passing through it. It is a representation of Peter Martyr in an hour of pain and stress, for upon the head are wounds, and around them the stains of fresh blood. He is depicted with his fingers pressed hard upon his lips, as if to refrain from the wild and whirling words so likely to issue from his agony. And, surely, to suffer and be silent is the high-water mark of self-victory. And the world has learned the lesson ever since the artist's hands wrought the symbol, the lesson that for one and all the great victory of life is to keep the door of the lips, and, like the great Master beneath the Judgment Seat of His foes, to hold our peace.

A similar representation comes to us from Japan, and is one of the symbols of that quaint land, dear to all, ancient and modern, native and alien. It is found in the ancient Temple of Nikko, and has been described by one who has seen it as "a carved and coloured frieze of oblong panels, descriptive of the adventures of three monkeys. The central plaque, which is very popular in Japan, and frequently reproduced, represents three monkeys, one covering his ears with his paws, another his mouth, a third his eyes." It is the central figure which appeals most to us, and its call for silence in this parabolic,

symbolic form comes with special emphasis from the animal world to man.

That such a symbol should be popular, speaks well indeed for the people who applaud it. Its appeal is accepted as wise. Its imitation is commended. Its rebuke is deserved, and so far as it really enters the blood and transmutes brazen, or even silvern, speech into golden silence, so far will the artist of this symbolic frieze reap his reward. And if silence is good for monkeys, how much more for men! let us add.

In the domestic world silence symbols are often found, especially in homes over which the destroying angel has passed, and in which vacant chairs are to be found.

Pathetic indeed it is to see the emblems of the dead in the so-called "living rooms." Here is a harp with broken strings, which it were desecration for stranger fingers to touch. One by one the top strings snap and curl, and lie idly where they fall. There is a violin, also with broken strings, out of which no music pours, nor will pour for many a long day. It hangs upon the wall, with its idle bow hard by. They are symbols of silence, memorials of the lamented dead, telling of broken lives, broken hearts, and vanished melodies.

In the business world the symbol plays its silent part. Many a firm still bears the names of dead men who, having played their part in it, left it for the grave. It is not the children only who wonder who the "& Co." standing out in gold lettering over so many shops, can represent.

These tell their story also of those silent "sleeping partners" who, behind the scenes, feed the concern; or of those retired men who keep their names symbolically alive in the silent "Co."

And so the silence symbols work in life, playing a larger part than we can ever realize, and all tending to keep alive the faint and tottering past. Let us not make light of them. They have much to say to us worth hearing, and their day will never pass while man is man, and earth is earth, and when the lettering grows faint, and the symbol tends to become an empty shell, let us regild the letters, and read into them afresh their meaning which so often helps to make the poetry of life.

CHAPTER XIV.

HISTORICAL SILENCE.

HISTORY covers so large a space, and silence plays so great a part in the happenings of the world, that it would seem impossible to chronicle even a fragment of those myriad moments when silence has been especially in evidence, while to do it systematically would require a too colossal knowledge of events. So all that I can attempt is to leap here and there to some of the scenes where silence has played its energetic part, and stood out conspicuously enough to be chronicled by the historian.

Thus, in the death of Socrates, we see the place of silence well exemplified, for we know that but for the silence of his dæmon he would, as he might easily have done, have escaped from his prison and condemnation. His friends pressed him hard, but his answer was always the same, that it was the will of his dæmon that he should die, and that he would not resist it. All through Socrates' life, he had submitted himself to his inner monitor, whom he personified as his dæmon, and this dæmon only spoke when he disapproved of any action,

restraining but never instigating. Believing his death then to be according to the will of God, he drank the poison cheerfully, and without blenching.

Touching, too, are those silences of his during the last days of waiting, until the return of the ship from Delos, which had accomplished its sacred errand. In the Phædo, we hear what, according to Plato, were the last words of the doomed man on the triumph of philosophy over the fear of death to the friends who surrounded him.

Now and again, Socrates lapsed into silence, as though pondering afresh the problems of the winding up of life, and facing, we may well believe, the deep solemnity of the passing:—

"When Socrates had said this there was silence for a considerable time; he himself being occupied in dwelling upon the thoughts to which he had given utterance, so far as one could judge, as most of us also were."

And then, when the end came, and, having taken the fatal hemlock, he awaited death, and his friends burst into unrestrained tears, he, the calmest of them all, said:—

"O my friends, what are you doing? On this account mainly I sent the women away, that they might not behave unwisely; for I have heard that we ought to die with good words in our ears. Be silent then, and brave."

"And," said Plato, "we at hearing this were ashamed, and refrained ourselves from weeping."

In the election of Popes there have been many suggestive silences, when suspense,

anxiety, and eagerness induced silence which might be felt. According to Creighton, in his story of the election of Æneas Sylvius Piccolomini as Pius II., there had been a good deal of wire-pulling and suggestive bribery the night before, and no one quite believed that the Holy Ghost could be trusted to recognise the merits of the Cardinals so well as the Cardinals themselves. Æneas' gout and poverty were pressed in his disfavour by Estouteville, the French Cardinal, who was careful to remind his more doubtful brother cardinals that he had the advantages of age and riches and birth, and was therefore most worthy of the dignity.

Æneas, too, crept around in the midnight hours, touting just as diligently for votes, and with glib tongue depreciating his rival. Each of them evidently thought that heaven helped those who helped themselves.

Then the Conclave began its sitting. In the first scrutiny Æneas won by nine votes against six, needing only three more to secure the coveted dignity. They had now to try "the method of accession," and the Cardinals sat still for the required guidance.

"All sat pale and silent, as though rapt by the Holy Ghost. No one spoke or opened his mouth, or moved any part of his body save his eyes which rolled from place to place."

The silence was wonderful as all waited, the inferiors expecting their superiors to begin.

One by one the votes dropped in amidst the silence, unbroken except for the acceding

voices voting for Æneas. When one vote alone was required, and it was feared that Prospero Colonna would give it to Æneas, Estouteville and Bessarion seized him by the arms, and, upbraiding him for the desertion of their cause, tried to lead him from the Conclave. But Prospero Colonna loudly cried out, "I also accede to the Cardinal of Siena, and make him Pope." And so the election was complete.

While we are in Rome I had better tell the story of another historical silence, in which a Pope figured. It was in connection with the removal and erection of the great Obelisk, which originally stood in the Circus of Caligula, and under the shadow of which the Christians suffered in the horrible games of Nero. For a long time it lay half buried on the Western side of St. Peter's.

To re-erect the needle in the place proposed, in front of St. Peter's, was deemed impossible even by such men as Michael Angelo and Sangallo. But Sixtus V had erased the word "impossible" from his vocabulary, and had solved more than one insoluble problem already.

Neither was he daunted when the Commission he had appointed to superintend the work quarrelled among themselves for its honour and its profit. His young friend, Domenico Fontana, should have the work with plenty of money and power for its accomplishment, and, to stimulate him, he was treated to the threat that should he fail his life was forfeit.

And so, behold Fontana, nothing daunted, in the Piazza with an army of able-bodied men,

and a crowd of horses, and with an audience of many thousands to see the thing done, or not done, which was highly probable.

Within full view was a gallows, on which was to swing the first man who broke silence, and disturbed the operations.

Slowly the obelisk rose until it reached half the required height. And then it stopped, and refused to rise higher. Failure was too clearly in sight.

But in the crowd was a sailor from San Remo, who, seeing the hitch, saw also its solution, and shouted out, "Water! Give water to the ropes."

The Pope's police, true to their instructions, grasped the offender, and hurried him off to the gallows for immediate death. But before the noose could be adjusted round his neck, the ropes attached to the Obelisk began to do their duty, and, swelling with the water, enabled the pulleys to do their work, and it reached its place.

Brought into the presence of the grateful Pope, the sailor received a pardon and a substantial reward, and, moreover, he and his race and place of birth received the privilege of henceforth supplying the palm branches to St. Peter's on Palm Sunday.

Naples is not far from Rome, and its proximity seems to invite another bit of historical silence, not at all Papistical, but decidedly historical, connected as it was with the unifying of Italy.

Garibaldi was then at the height of his powers, and as Dictator and successful General

was occupying the Palazzo D'Anjou. A great crowd of grateful Neapolitans had assembled outside to acclaim their liberator. But Garibaldi did not appear to respond to their enthusiastic greetings. In his place came another Red Shirt, who, on the balcony, silently laid his cheek on his hands to signify that the tired chief was asleep. Quickly the crowd interpreted the message in dumb-show, and stole away saying to one another, "*Egli dormi*;" "He is asleep."

To those who know anything of an Italian Carnival, or have heard of its exuberance and noise, the fact that all that night not a sound of it penetrated the centre of the city will be eminently suggestive of self-control, admiration and extreme thoughtfulness. The silence was that night like the silence of the dead Pompeii, Trevelyan tells us.

The vision of Brutus may not be history, but it may well be placed among historical silences, for, if not history now, once upon a time it was not considered improbable, and may perhaps be reckoned true in the future, so swiftly are we discovering psychical wonders in man's wonderful nature and surroundings.

Plutarch tells how Marcus Brutus one night in camp, sitting up alone with a dim light burning before him, and all the rest of the camp hushed and silent, fancied that someone came in, and, looking towards the door, saw "a terrible and strange appearance of an unnatural and frightful body standing by him without speaking." Brutus boldly asked it :—

"What are ye of men and Gods, and upon what business come to me?"

"I am your evil genius, Brutus; you shall see me at Philippi."

"Then I shall see you," replied the unmoved and calm Brutus.

The story goes on to its dread termination, and tells how, on the eve of the battle of Philippi, the vision appeared again to him, in the same shape, but this time without saying a word.

I do not know that there is any particular moral attaching to the story, except the possible fact that we are never so much alone as we think we are, and that of what we do not know ourselves others may hold the key. Perhaps we may see in the story the Nemesis of crime, for Brutus, with all his general integrity, was after all one of the assassins of his best friend, Cæsar, who, at any rate, was no tyrant to him. Psychologists can match the vision, and will no doubt add this one to their general collection of spectral appearances.

The fate of Prince Conradin, the last hope of the Ghibbelines in Italy, provides us with an illustration which marks most clearly the barbarous times in which he lived and died. The lawful heir to the throne of Naples, upon which sat, however, Charles of Anjou, he put his fortunes to the test, and lost at the battle of Tagliacozzo.

The ferocious victor proceeded to spill blood by wholesale, and wearied out his executioners. But Conradin was of Imperial blood, and could scarcely be killed like the common sort. Still,

a way must be found, and was. He was put upon his trial before hostile judges, who, with only a show of justice, sought his condemnation.

The judges held back, and were silent, so Charles acted and condemned Conradin, taking judicial silence as being judicial consent.

Surely, never was there so silent a scene in the Market Place of Naples as when the last of the Suabian line perished. Many fell on their knees, we are told, touched with pity, and the axe fell in the deadest of silence. Pope Clement IV appeared to be privy to the whole plot, and beheld the tragedy in silence with never a protest and never a spark of pity for this royal youth of fifteen, thus foully murdered. And Clement was one of the infallible ones; save the mark!

The Inquisition, in its horrible crusades against the truth on behalf of error, was, in its way, as careless of life as was Charles of Anjou, and waded through blood to its destined goal. It was not often that its prisoners lived to tell the tale of its black dealings. But there was one who passed through their hands and appeared above ground again, to the surprise of all his friends, and naturally of himself. His name was Fray Luis de Leon, an Augustine monk, of good repute. For five years the Inquisition dungeons held him fast, and then he was liberated. On the day after his release, he went straight to the Lecture Hall of Salamanca, where he was wont to lecture, and, standing in his old place, he began, "As I was saying," taking up the lecture where he had left off five years before.

Probably, he lectured all the better for those five years' silence and meditation, and, if his audience was changed, he was so eager to get back to his old Chair, that those five years were as though obliterated from his mind.

In the story of the martyrdom of John Huss, we see the Roman Church again on the war-path, and violating all the rules of fair play in their efforts to extirpate what they considered heresy. And some of the silences attached to the story may well be deemed historical.

At first, they sought to silence his preaching, and solemnly excommunicated him with bell, book and candle. But he preached on in spite of the injunction.

Then the authorities, having caught three young students who had made light of indulgences, put them to death. And at their funeral, we read, "A vast crowd followed the procession in solemn silence." They were the first of the Bohemian martyrs.

For a time Huss withdrew himself from the scenes of his accustomed activities, but not into idleness. What he could not say with his lips, he said in another way. There was no stopping his spiritual energies. Letters, books, and pamphlets streamed from his pen.

At last, armed with a safe conduct from the Emperor Sigismund, he proceeded to Constance, where the Council had begun its memorable sittings for the appeasement of religious strife in Popedom. Only by such a safe conduct could he venture to thrust himself into the grim embraces of his foes. His friends, who had less

faith than he, tried to dissuade him, assuring him that condemnation would be sure to follow so imprudent a step. But he was anxious to state his case, and defend it.

Huss soon discovered that he was amongst unscrupulous men, for he had not been long in Constance, lodging in a widow's house, before the prison doors opened and closed upon him. Safe conducts are not very safe when Papal ecclesiastics have the interpretation of them, and he was made prisoner by order of the Council. So Huss found himself in a dark and narrow dungeon, damp with the waters of the lake, and close to the mouth of a sewer. Then fever laid hold of him, and nearly snapped the brittle cord of life.

Protests came from all quarters, royal, ecclesiastical, and lay, but Roman hands are made to seize, never to relax, especially when the gripped man is a presumed heretic. And so poor Huss remained under lock and key.

At length, even Sigismund, for State reasons, ceased to protest, and gave him over to his foes.

The trial proceeded in the same cruel fashion, not for justice but for a conviction. He was really condemned before he was tried. If he answered their questions, they called it sophistry. If he was silent, they exclaimed, "Your silence shows assent to these errors."

Once, when discussion waxed warm, fiery Huss turned upon the interrupters and said :—

"I expected to find in the Council more piety, reverence and order." Then for a time silence fell on those rebuked.

Sigismund, who was more anxious for his own advantage than that of Huss, proved less and less friendly, until he veered round to the side of the foe. He was the Judas among the band now.

By and bye, Huss was formally condemned, and when he would answer for himself, he was ordered to keep silence. He was target now for the arrows, and must submit to be shot at freely, and with his own quiver emptied. His only resource was to speak to God, and there, before his bitter enemies, he knelt in prayer.

Then he solemnly fixed his gaze on the Emperor, upon whose pledged word he had ventured to come to Constance, saying, as he did so, that he had acted of his own free will, trusting in the Imperial safe-conduct. And it is related that, as he gazed upon the false Emperor, Sigismund blushed.

Then he stepped into the fire, and began to sing from the Liturgy, until the flames, swept by the winds, rendered him speechless. But, even then, the spectators saw his lips move for a few minutes before his spirit rose to Him for Whom he was dying.

Truly, a very cluster of silences hung round the last days of this glorious martyr, golden silences, which the world of true Christians will never willingly forget.

In connection with Savanarola we must not omit a grim bit of historical silence on the part of Lorenzo de Medici and his last hours. Lorenzo's conscience was burdened by sundry

sins, and he craved absolution from them at the hands of his Church. Fearing an imperfect absolution, he summoned Savonarola to his bedside.

"I know no honest friar save this one," were his words.

"Three things are needful," said the reforming Friar to the agitated man :—

"First, a great and living faith in God's mercy. Secondly, you must restore all your ill-gotten wealth."

To these conditions Lorenzo nodded his head in assent.

But there was a third one, the most unpalatable of all :—

"Lastly, you must restore liberty to the people of Florence."

Lorenzo, without saying a word, angrily turned his face away in refusal, and so died, unrepentant and unabsolved, Lorenzo the Magnificent.

There is a suggestive bit of historical silence told of Queen Elizabeth, quite of a piece with her bluff honesty. Having broken with Rome, she was not likely to seek to mend the breach, and less likely still to do so under threats. And so when Pope Sixtus V invited her with all priestly suavity, but with all stern authority, to return into the bosom of the Roman Church, it was written of her, "Elizabeth replied not a word" ; only laughed. Sixtus, it seems, had a great admiration for Queen Bess, but that refusal and laugh dispersed it, and he determined to deprive her by force of the English

crown; a thing which he found was more easily determined than done.

"By what good deed can I atone for my sins?" asked the Grand Monarch, Louis XIV., of his confessor, Père la Chaise.

"By the extirpation of Protestantism in France," was the reply.

Accepting the condition, he set about the hideous task, and having by threats brought to his side Victor Amadeus II, Duke of Savoy, singled out the Vaudois valleys of Piedmont for his first bloody crusade.

By fire and sword the two monarchs swept the valleys of the men and women whose only crime was that they approached God through Jesus Christ alone, and worshipped their Father in spirit and in truth. Mercilessly the dread work was done, and so thoroughly that the beautiful valleys became as silent as the grave. The church bells rusted in their turrets for want of ringers. The vines straggled untrimmed over the vineyards. Lands lay fallow for lack of men to work them. There were no merry voices of children in this province of death. The Grand Monarch won his absolution and damned his soul. Milton's prayer was surely answered:—

> "Avenge, O Lord, Thy slaughtered saints, whose bones
> Lie scattered on the Alpine mountains cold;
> Even them who kept Thy truth so pure of old,
> When all our fathers worshipped sticks and stones,
> Forget not."

History records many instances of stratagems invented for the sake of silencing inconvenient

people, who might easily, unless so circumvented, make trouble. Two of them occur to my mind as instances.

In the struggle between Charles I and his Parliament, it was found advisable at times, when the debate was likely to wax too hot, to arrange a graceful muzzle for some opponent. And so, at least on two occasions, they voted the formidable member to the Chair, thus effectually stopping any reflections he would otherwise have made.

Thus, when the House of Commons went into Committee on the question of Ecclesiastical Union with the Scots, the opponents of Episcopacy, fearing the shrewd and clever tongue of Culpepper, placed him in the Chair.

They took a similar course when the Root-and-Branch Bill was considered by a Committee of the whole house. Hyde was promptly placed in the Chair in order to silence him and his advocacy of the Episcopal side. But Hyde was not so devoid of devices as they expected, for, Chairman though he was, he did his best to throw obstacles in the way of the Bill. Of course it was all very mean, for lovers of truth ought never to check discussion, and, if they do, it is only proof positive that they prefer victory to truth and justice.

In times of great crises, when no one knows what to do or say, and all alike are smitten with impotence at the same time, silence seems the only expression of feeling.

Thus was it in the House of Commons, when a riot occurred in the streets of London after

the foolish attempt of King Charles to rescue Strafford by enrolling a small force and capturing the Tower. Immediately, the streets in Westminster were filled with a shrieking crowd demanding the death of Strafford. And they were not rabble either, but merchants and shopkeepers.

"When they met that morning," writes Gardiner, "the Commons remained for some time silently regarding one another, as men looking for counsel, and finding none."

A little later on, after a brighter interlude, due to some incongruous matter in the Orders for the Day, the gloom returned. "Then was there again silence for a quarter of an hour."

It was the silence before the storm, and had they known how fierce the storm was like to be, their silence would have been deeper and more lasting.

There is a vivid little incident told of the Revolution of 1848, when the crowd in Paris were bent on deeds of destruction, and roamed about to steal, and smash, and disfigure.

Jowett, Stanley, and Morier visited Paris just after, and Morier relates how the ravaging people found in the Chapel of the Tuilleries a picture of Christ. Up to that moment their hands rose and fell in steady destruction. But here they stopped dead.

"Every one should bare his head," cried one.

And they did, and, moreover, knelt down whilst the picture was carried out of the Chapel. In dead silence it was conveyed through the

kneeling crowd of revolutionalists to a neighbouring church. "You might have heard a fly buzz," said Morier.

Then the work of desolation, suspended for a time, proceeded afresh.

But is not all history a record of silent powers at work day and night? History is the effort to trace the changes which pass over nations and transform them. And this is the hardest of all the historian's tasks. For who can discover the quiet agencies which, like the atmosphere, are ever at work, and which imperceptibly change the current of men's thoughts until the veil falls? The conflicts of to-day are not the conflicts of to-morrow. Men grow hot over matters which, later on, leave them cold as ice. Silent powers have been at work to turn men's energies and interests into quite other channels. Cities which hummed with life have been somehow depopulated and left to drop into picturesque ruin, and history cannot always tell us why. Like the leaves dropping silently from the tree, unnoticed by human eye, so have old customs, and thoughts, and ambitions passed silently away.

CHAPTER XV.

PROVERBIAL SILENCE.

"BREVITY is the soul of wit," we are often reminded. And brevity is also the soul of speech, if we may judge by the popularity of the proverb in all languages.

For Joubert has many sympathisers in his endeavour to abbreviate thought and to make it portable.

"If ever a man," he writes, "was tormented by the ambition to put a book into a page, a page into a phrase, and that phrase into a word, I am the man."

This tendency to compress into the smallest possible volume is likely to increase rather than to diminish, seeing that the effort to shorten all processes is growing apace. When a whole bullock is thrust into the compass of a few jars, and when you can secure a decent meal within the measure of a lozenge or a biscuit, when short cuts are the order of the day in schools and colleges, and languages can be well learned by abbreviating systems, when the cry is for short sermons, short lectures, and short everything, we are not surprised that thought should be served up in compressed

tabloids, and that proverbial wisdom should be fashionable.

Of course, this compression of thought into so tiny a compass is bound to mutilate it more or less. Something has to be dropped out. And, after all, proverbs, with all their wisdom, cannot tell you all that you want to know. Good for emergencies, a rough and ready way of communicating thought, they are as handy as the small coins of the realm, of great value for the currency, but not quite so complete as the larger ones.

But how wise they are! What a telling part they play in the education of the many! And what an admirable tag they are for clenching an argument, and thrusting home some trenchant truth!

But how came they into being? we ask.

We can only guess, for at the birth of a proverb there were but few witnesses, if any. Full of life they are, yet most of them grey with age, among the halest and the oldest of earth's good things.

One thing, however, I think that we can say with decision, and that is that the proverb is the child of silence. No wind-bag had a hand in the genesis of a proverb. The man of words, who deals in chapters and volumes, can be no master of sentences. The proverb is beyond him. For the proverb is a flash, which just shoots out of a mind which broods. The full man, seeing all round a thought, and seeing vividly, and letting it long simmer until every idle ingredient is evaporated,

by and bye finds slipping out of his mind and lips, clean, and whole, and usable, a proverb.

And, as soon as it appears and falls upon the public ear, it is adopted with acclamation. No proverb has to wait long for recognition. With the hall-mark of popular approval upon it, it goes forth and finds an entry at every door as a dear and valued friend.

Henceforth, it enters into the mental circulation of the nation and the world, and helps to keep its blood rich, and red, and pure.

Fortunately, we are able to glean much popular wisdom on the subject of the silence proverb. For the minds of men have been busy with the necessity of staying the flood of speech, and in their proverbs we find their suggestions embalmed. They have little patience with garrulity, and throw fine scorn upon it.

"Still waters run deep," is the world's conviction, and nobody is likely to dispute the fact. Deep natures are still natures too, not running over the stones, like the shallow stream which betrays its shallowness by its noise. In the deep waters the large fish gather, and in a still mind large ideas accumulate. The observant world has great respect for silent people, believing that where the depth is greatest there is the greatest quiet.

A saying of similar import is the proverb which tells us that :—

"All kinds of wood burn silently except thorns, which crackle and call out." The thorns are evidently anxious to claim kinship with the tall trees of the forest, and do not wish

to be looked on as a class apart. But whether this be so or not, the little natures of the world are not fond of silence, and cannot even die quietly, but must needs be in evidence even then. But they cannot expect to have the dignity of their greater brothers, and, if they call out, it is what we might expect from such small fry. Littleness and noise seem somehow to be of a piece.

Garrulity and emptiness have much in common too, to judge by the proverb, which assures us that "Empty vessels make the greatest sound." There is no better instrument for manufacturing noise than the drum, and none more empty. The big bell which booms out its vibrative note would fail of its purpose were it more solid. And the man or woman of chatter obtains the tendency from emptiness too. You get little sound from tapping the full glass.

The difficulty of holding the tongue is quite appreciated by men at large. It is easy enough to talk, but not to talk is stiff progress against the stream. And so it is considered that "A wise head makes a close mouth."

Folly stands with its mouth open, and words come pouring out along a ready pathway, but wisdom distrusts the open mouth and the free passage, puts a padlock on the lips, and stands sentinel within, challenging every word which seeks an outlet. "A long tongue," they say, "is the sign of a short head." "Who knows most says least." "Much chatter, little wit."

Silence is even made to stand for the high-water mark of wisdom, for one proverb declares that, "He knows enough, who knows how to live, and keeps his own counsel."

And so clear it is that the silent man has the best of it in life, that even the fool passes muster on the strength of his silence. "The fool who is silent passes for wise." But then he is possibly not such a fool as is hinted at, for does a fool ever keep silence for long?

Probably, the most popular and universal of all proverbs on silence is that comparative one that, "Speech is silvern; silence is golden." This is eminently fair for not putting speech out of court altogether, but giving it a silvern nature. Yet silence is the better metal. Like gold, silence passes currency everywhere; like gold, its value is unquestioned; like gold, it never loses its value or its stability.

As we might expect, proverbs which describe the fruitfulness of silence are well to the fore. It pays to be silent.

The Italians say, "Who speaks sows; who keeps silence reaps." Both sow for a harvest, and sow in hope, no doubt, but the man to reap the better harvest is the silent one. And is there not the further idea that, if the talker reaps a harvest at all, it is a harvest of thistle-down?

There are not wanting proverbs to explain why this must be so. For word-sowing is on the sensitive hearts and minds of men, and some response, according to the nature of the words, they are sure to make. And so:—

"He who says what he likes shall hear what he does not like." He shall be paid back in his own coin. This clearly refers to the blunt man who says what is uppermost, says what he thinks, says it all. For we all live in glass houses, and to throw stones may lead to retaliation and the breaking of our own windows.

Similarly, "The evil which issues from thy mouth falls into thy bosom." It hurts the utterer more than the attacked and maligned.

So the Arabs say, "Let not your tongue cut your throat," as, indeed, it is quite capable of doing.

On all counts, therefore, the silent man is saved much sorrow. It is not he who has to "eat his own words," and it is his mouth of which the proverb declares, "No flies get into a closed mouth."

Therefore, "Let him that is well off hold his tongue." It is a clear case of letting well alone.

It would seem, too, that, in the opinion of the world, truth lies more on the side of the silent. And, certainly, silent lips are not likely to offend and lie.

"'They say so' is half a liar," sums up neatly the experience of men. But some go further than this, and advise us to "Believe nothing that you hear, and only half of what you see." And it seems that the more the talk the more the falsities, for, "A great talker is a great liar."

The only safety, therefore, would appear to lie in silence, for, "He that says nothing never lies." And even here, if we care to press it,

the truth is not exactly hit, for looks and gesture and attitude may convey the lie only too easily. But silence cuts off many an occasion of lying.

Insincerity is a frequent sin of the open mouth, for, "The heart does not think all that the mouth says," according to the proverb. And, indeed, there is a sort of race between truth and talk, and, so long as the pace is equal, truth is maintained. But let the lips go ahead, and insincerity begins, for the lips are apt to say what the mind does not think, and perhaps does not mean. "He speaks without thinking," we say, and, "He is drawing on his imagination."

The lips, then, are like the runaway chariot, with all control gone, and, like all runaway things, they are likely to do not a little mischief before they stop. This is the genesis of idle and evil gossip. People are discussed at random and, as the proverb has it, "Once in people's mouths it is hard to get out again."

"Lying and gossipping go hand in hand."

"He who talks much is sometimes right," and only sometimes.

Of course, the general public has its own remedy when the runaway lips take men's names and reputations in vain, and that is not to listen. The listeners are the instigators of much gossip, and, little as they think it, are almost as much to blame as the vitriolic talkers. Thus the proverb tells us, "The receiver is as bad as the thief." "He sins as much who holds the bag as he who puts into it."

On the safety of silence we might expect the world to say much in its short and sharp proverb, and we are not disappointed.

"Of thine unspoken word thou art master; thy spoken word is master of thee." Many a Law Court has proved the truth of this.

To give ourselves away has always been a foolish process, and the ready tongue has often done this to perfection.

"He that revealeth his secret makes himself a slave."

"Better the feet slip than the tongue."

The impossibility of recalling the spoken word, like the posted letter which we would fain fish out again from the letter box, is a fact worth remembering before we speak. It is easy to let your birds out of the cage into the open, but will they come back again when you call? I fear not. And so the proverb says, "He hath tied a knot with his tongue which he cannot undo with his teeth." For, "A word once out flies everywhere." This is why, "It is more necessary to guard the mouth than the chest."

Thus silence is a veritable peacemaker, preventing endless mischief, as many a friend has discovered for himself to his comfort. "A shut mouth keeps out strife." "Keep your mouth shut and keep your friend."

There would be fewer trials for libel and defamation of character, if garrulous people only remembered that, "A silent man's words are not brought into Court."

It is interesting to notice how different

nations regard the expenditure of words, and to compare almost the same proverb with its variations.

An Italian says, "A few words to the wise," belonging as he does to a somewhat voluble nation.

Englishmen say, "A word to the wise," being a more reticent people.

But the most reticent of all, the Dutchman, has it, "Half a word is enough to the wise."

The stamp of the proverb has been impressed also on the more solid worth of the silent, there being no doubt about the side on which the greater wit lies. They are not all like the conceited wife, who is quoted as saying to her hen-pecked mate:—"Hold your tongue, husband, and let me talk that has all the wit."

But how ripe was their judgment who first coined such proverbs as, "It is the worse wheels which creak most," and, "Better one living word than a hundred dead ones."

"It is possible to cackle and lay no egg," tells the same story. Or, as the more personal one says, "We cannot lay eggs, but we can cackle," which depicts the talker and his emptiness to the life.

But it would seem that the silent are cultivated, not born, if the proverb be true that, "Speaking comes by nature; silence comes by understanding."

It is not likely that the sharp world should overlook the gap which often exists between talking and doing, or be blind to the reason of

it. And so we find a cluster of sayings which express the fact and its roots.

"The greatest talkers are always the least doers," embodies the fact universally true that it is easier to canvass an intention than to go forward to its execution. "'Tis sooner said than done." "Between wording and working there is a long road."

It is the same in the animal world, it seems, for the manufacturer of the proverb is fond of culling illustrations from it.

"Never was a mewing cat a good mouser," because, "When cats are mousing they can't mew." "A barking dog was never a good hunter." And we can easily see why.

That silence is the language of the heart the shrewd man of the world has long considered and expressed. Only a blind man could overlook this evident fact of experience. "Whom we love best, to them we say the least."

In the pursuit of truth silence has the great advantage, according to the proverb. Disputations it condemns, when they are overdone. "In too much disputing truth is lost." It gets buried under the verbal rubbish. Men are apt to dispute for victory, rather than for truth.

Yea, even in the homely actions of life, such as eating, the silent man is at an advantage for, "The sheep that bleats loses its mouthful," and, "A braying ass eats little hay."

The blessedness of keeping our secrets to ourselves is generally confessed, and has been vividly rendered in the proverb:—"The only way to keep a secret is to say nothing." "The

secret of two is God's secret; the secret of three is nobody's secret." "Three know it; all know it."

And secret-telling to our very friends may lead to trouble, for who can read the heart? So, "Tell your friend your secret, and he will put his foot upon your neck."

Neither must we lead our fellow into temptation by laying on him a burden greater than he can bear, and so, "He who would close another man's mouth should first tie up his own."

The proverbs on a woman's tongue are many, and exceedingly malicious, showing clearly that they were minted in no feminine factory. They may be true of some, but to label the whole sex as alike guilty is a clear wrong.

"One tongue is enough for a woman." So runs one saying, with its artful under-suggestion that it is quite enough that she should overflow in one language, without the possibility of running over in a second or third.

"A woman's tongue is her sword, and she does not let it rust." Why should we, a woman might ask, when we are so much less able to hold our own than man in the sphere of strength and muscle? Would you cut off all our weapons of defence?

That women find it difficult to keep a secret has been generally proclaimed, and, with so much smoke, there is probably some fire somewhere. But can men boast in the matter?

"A woman conceals only what she does not know," is very neatly put, but conveys the

notion that she is utterly and universally untrustworthy, which is a libel.

Against a woman's truthfulness the proverb is often levelled with nasty barbs, as though, when seeming to tell the truth, she is scheming. "Women always speak the truth, but not the whole truth."

But, perhaps, for wholesale slander, nothing beats that proverb that, "Words are female, and deeds are male." A magnificent assumption by some man, whose conceit was colossal. Had he no mother? Did he never know love, or was he the refusal of all good women? The marvel is that such a proverb did not die at its birth. But no, it passed into circulation, and has been adopted by many who ought to have known better.

That, "Women are never at a loss for words," is probably true, and we may accept it without adopting the idea intended to be conveyed, that they use too largely the power with which they have been endowed.

But while most of the proverbs take the line of depreciation, there are some which tell another story, and we are glad to chronicle them. "Slander expires at a good woman's door," says an eminent one, and, so far as they make it true, the whole sex may treasure it.

"Silence," which another proverb says, "is the best ornament of a woman," was evidently the method of extinguishing a vicious spark brought for her acceptance. And good were it if slander were always so promptly extinguished, and if the door were always shut against it.

The proverb now and then desists from mere condemnation, and descends into advice and counsel, anxious, it seems, to correct the over-busy tongues of the offenders.

"Turn your tongue seven times before you speak," is a French counsel. And we well know that heedless talk comes from heedless thought.

To the sufferers from a sharp tongue the proverb gives a word of advice worth taking and practising, "To rude words, deaf ears."

And to those unwise souls who say what they think, or don't think, the warning is given, "All truths are not good to be uttered."

The place of the heart in connection with the lips cannot be safely disregarded, for, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." And so we are reminded, that, "Where there is least heart, there is most tongue." Love is an excellent remedy for garrulity, especially that of the more malicious sort.

One rule to direct the doubtful man is worth registering for its wisdom, "Be silent, or say something better than silence."

While for the unrepentant and everlasting talker, who seems beyond the reach of instruction, the brief treatment suggested as necessary is, "To evil tongues, scissors."

To some minds which are pessimistic the outlook is dark exceedingly, and all that they can utter on the subject is the despairing proverb, "When the rooks are silent, the swans begin to sing."

But, someone may ask, Is there no proverb

in favour of speech? Are they all on one side? No, not quite; but they are not, as a rule, proverbs to be proud of, as they are extremely worldly-wise and material.

"Dumb folks get no land," remarks one. And in the great share-outs of life, it is quite possible that the modest souls who keep in the background are neglected and defrauded. But some would rather lose the lands than have to scramble for them, or shout with the crowd.

"Always talk big," says another, "and you will not be forgotten," as if swelling oneself out is likely to make the world see you better. To be in evidence is with many the golden rule, and so they push to the fore, and raise their voices high and loud.

And what a miserable saying is that which suggests the liberal use of sugar and treacle, "He who knows not how to flatter, knows not how to talk." If one must needs kiss the Blarney Stone in order to succeed in life, then success is not worth the energy and time demanded of us.

Still, there is a place for speech, and no one would care to deny it; only wisdom bids us prefer the silent ways of life, as being, on all counts, the worthier and better.

"There is a time to speak, and a time to be silent," the old Book tells us, and he is wisest who times his silences and his words to the best advantage.

CHAPTER XVI.

SILENCE REFUGES.

WE are living in ingenious days, when men are devising all kinds of protections for worried humanity, and, in many cases, devising them well. There are harbours for storm-tossed vessels; there are homes for broken minds and bodies; there are island refuges for timid wayfarers, who scarcely dare cross our busy city streets but for such provision; there are homes for the aged, the lonely, and the young; there are refuges for incurables as they wait for death. So we cannot say that man has forgotten his fellow-man in his extremity.

What is wanted now is an extension of the idea to other sufferers, such as the sensitive souls to whom life has been made a burden by the strife of tongues and the overmuch babble of the day.

There are many, happily, who do not mind the clatter of tongues; and, indeed, who rather enjoy it. Such go, for choice, to spots where the noise is loudest; for one reason, because they love to speak loudly themselves. But, probably, these would change their taste, should they be reduced to listening only.

But as we have to legislate for the weakest, so we have to make provision for those who shudder at high voices and loud tones, and who feel themselves almost chastised when volubility begins. Much listening sets their heads spinning, and throws their whole nervous system into such disorder that words, too liberally poured forth, chastise them like whips, and rub them on the raw.

The question then which we must try to answer is this:—Are there any means of circumventing the hail of words, any refuges to which men can fly in the day of distress, any device which we can recommend to the overtaken and assaulted? What men have done in the past can surely be done again and to-day. It is an important enquiry, and an altogether serious one for suffering humanity. Let us address ourselves to the matter practically.

The main trouble is that the ear is less well protected than, say, the eye. If we do not want to see a thing, nature has given us a lid to drop; indeed two lids. We can well inhibit the nose from smelling by an effort of will which throws the organ of smell out of gear. But the ear knows no such remedy. It is left to itself absolutely, without any self-protection.

As an illustration of what *mechanical refuges* can do, Herbert Spencer, we are told, manufactured a pair of earlids for himself, and kept them ready for emergencies. He listened so long as he felt inclined, or so long as was good for him, and then promptly applied the protection and excluded all sound. I am afraid

the use of such a deafener was not very popular amongst his interlocutors, who very conceivably would resent the cutting short of their periods, though he himself was especially proud of it. But, then, we are not all philosophers, and are not so privileged, and, being smaller men, have to be content to suffer smilingly. I have not heard of any imitators.

Mechanical refuges have taken rather the form of sound-proof rooms, for the afflicted to retire to and be happy.

Pliny, we read, built in one of his villas a multitude of rooms for all kinds of purposes. Some he made for a sea view; others for the better hearing of music; still others for the sunshine and the shade. But one he built for the sake of quiet, where he could shut himself up and meditate. It was so arranged, we are told, that "No noise ever reaches his ears."

Carlyle, whose whole working life was one continuous battle with noise, and whose existence was made miserable by it, tried many devices to secure quietness. If noisy cocks crowed, he bought them up. Probably, this made fowl-keeping too profitable an occupation, for fresh cocks were imported to take their place, with, of course, a view to sale. So he seriously thought of buying the lease of the property, and leaving it unoccupied.

But his most triumphant achievement was the construction of a noise-proof room at the top of his house in Cheyne Row, a room within a room, where he could work and think in

peace. And so he checkmated "the demon fowls."

Wallenstein, the Commander of the Emperor's army in the Thirty Years' War, being a light sleeper and much troubled by noise at night, secured the needful quiet by stretching chains across the ends of the street where he was quartered, so that not a footfall might reach his ears.

But such an arrangement is not open to us, or many of us would divert a good deal of noisy traffic to other quarters.

Neither may we venture upon his more drastic remedy of consigning obstinate offenders to the block, though, probably, the threat secured the silence without further proceedings.

Seeing that, on the score of expense and insignificance, we are debarred from such mechanical protections, what shall we do ?

There is one common-sense method of escape open to some. If you cannot extinguish the offensive noises by mechanical means, why not get away from them ? There are surely *quiet spots* somewhere upon God's earth ; hurry away thither. You may have to travel some distance, for some voices are extremely penetrating, but never mind the distance. It will be worth it.

There are quiet places, where only country sounds are heard, and, to most people these are not unmusical or strident in the country. Even Carlyle's "demon fowls," would scarcely have irritated him if their cries had sounded from their country dung-heaps. It is sound

misplaced which becomes unmusical, just as dirt is only honest soil in its right place.

And if the ordinary country does not yield the right kind of quiet, why not go to the quiet hills and mountains, raised high above earth's common clatter? There is stillness, if you like; quiet of the best possible pattern. Of course, even these high regions have their own peculiar sounds. The lowing of a distressed calf, or the bleating of some friendly sheep, or the yodel, or the horn reverberating through the ranges; all these you must expect to hear. But, then, these only accentuate the silence, and help to deepen it.

Only keep away from all climbing stations, for there, in the early morning, you may expect some trying rat-a-tat-tats, some clatter of boots thrown about, and cheerful shouts, and banging doors, from the high-spirited young people who are on their way to the mountain top. It is in their nature to depart thus noisily, and if you can stand this, you will be let alone in peace until they come back again, or start again. But even these noises you can "turn," so to speak, by getting up yourself, and making a little row on your own account. For, as a rule, clatter is only noisy to you when it is made by somebody else. Moreover, clatter is much less disturbing when your eyes are open, and the light is turned on.

Or, failing the mountains, there are desert resorts, where silence may be quaffed in full doses. But there are drawbacks even there for those who like quiet but not loneliness. And

this is ever bound to be a constant difficulty, for company and noise are companions, and quiet exists, as a rule, because there is nobody to make a noise.

Moreover, if the multitude rush to these still places for the sake of the quiet, then they cease to be quiet, for men are bound to bring their disturbances with them. It is quite possible, too, to get more silence than we want.

Then if the desert will not do, why not try the high seas ? Here the spaces are large, and the population more or less limited, and trams, and carts, and hooting motors, and the whole clan of noisy things are not. Unfortunately, the few may make more noise than even the many on shore, especially if the seas run high. And there are bands, and sports, more or less noisy, and the shrieking of the winds, and the throbbing of the engines. But still, all this being said, the silence on the seas is real silence compared with the land clatter. So, barring the seas' special unpleasantnesses, it might answer for some.

Supposing, however, that means are limited, and we are tied to the home-round, are there no quiet spots, where we can take refuge, close to our own front doors ? I think so.

There are silent churches, many of them, where the throngs are not, and where you may be sure of being left alone. Street noises are toned down, and we may listen to the beating of our hearts if we will. And if the holy place awakens distressing accusations, can we not kneel in prayer, and still them ? There is not much

harsh clangour of the conscience and spirit which cannot be allayed by the spirit of prayerful petition. Try it.

Then there is the quiet churchyard outside, where lie the silent dead, their talking days over. There was one who wrote a useful book on his Meditations among the Tombs, and to meditate one must have quietness and silence at least. What Harvey found we can find for certain. And now-a-days, with gardening artists at work, were it not for the tomb-stones, you might imagine yourself in some ducal domain, so subduedly gorgeous is it. Perhaps, however, there are too many noisy memories there to give us the inner quiet we crave. But again, for a compensation, you will find that jarring frets and worrying happenings find their true proportion there, and big things look very little in that sacred spot. Yes, we can scarcely do better in our search for silence than haunt such a place as this.

When Francis of Assisi burst in upon the festivities at the Castle of Montefeltro, where a new knight was being fêted, he preached one of his touching sermons which made many of his hearers forget the tourney for which they had come. One of these impressed souls was Orlando dei Cattani, Count of Chiusi, in Casentino, who, taking the Saint aside, said to him :—

"I have in Tuscany a mountain, especially favourable to meditation. It is entirely isolated, and would well suit anyone who desired to do penance, far from the noises of the world ;

if it pleased you, I would willingly give it to you, and your brethren, for the salvation of my soul."

Francis gladly accepted the gift, and henceforth La Verna became his true refuge from the noises of the world, often sought, and used to the end. Reached only by passes of great height, embraced by lofty mountains of the Apennines, La Verna rises the highest of all the neighbouring peaks. Around, amidst the woods, the birds find their paradise, and sing their gratitude. Here St. Francis lived his happiest moments, and drew closest to God, and God to him. Here his Lord appeared to him, and impressed upon hands and feet and side, so it is said and believed, the holy stigmata. The Gospels were continually in his hands, and he spent long hours in closest communion with his Master the Crucified One. He penetrated deeper and deeper into the dense woods, to be alone even from his disciples. Here, too, he mourned the only too probable decay of his beloved Order, and here he cast his burden on the Lord. A refuge indeed, and one worth chronicling as a suggestion for to-day for the tried and wearied.

If secularly inclined, and anxious to improve the shining moment, not only silently but advantageously, we can recommend a reading room. Here silence is strictly enjoined, and, if broken, a sharp "Hush!" is sure to emerge from some corner. There are few brazen enough to do more than whisper in a reading room. But there are some who, from sheer natural incapacity, cannot be silent anywhere.

There are some mechanically arranged rooms,

where a dropped book echoes out like a thunder clap, and a voice, recklessly used, awakens a most alarming rumble. A defect acoustically, it is a huge success from the silence point of view, ensuring unremitting care in not awakening such alarming echoes.

Then there are *rest cures*, which, as far as I understand, lay stress on perfect quiet, as a remedy for overwrought nerves. It must be difficult thus to play the vegetable, but, if by such quiescence, it is possible to act a higher and better part in the world afterwards, those who have to endure it have no cause for complaint.

The idea seems to be, that, given no company, there is no opportunity for breaking silence. We do not excite ourselves when we are alone, and the tongue does not carry us away when we have only ourselves to listen to. Controversies are impossible, unless they be waged with the doctor or the nurse, and it is their business to keep on the safe side of them. So, unless the patient talks to himself, the tongue's occupation is gone. And in this rest cure, being absolutely voluntary, he can feel that the gain which silence brings is all his own.

It will be of advantage, too, in our search for peace and quiet to seek out *quiet people* and cultivate their acquaintance.

It is useless to expect to be quiet when we voluntarily go where noise is, and where we know from bitter experience that it is in full flood. This would be an inconsistency too flagrant.

The quiet set may not be smart, and may be

out of the Society "running," and consequently not in odour with the fashionable, but you must pay something for the silence which you ardently crave, and why not this price? To company with "loud" people may satisfy the natural man, but if it throws you, spirit, soul, and body, out of gear, where does the gain come in? You cannot have it both ways; you must in your choices sacrifice something. And it is your business, in weighing the gains and losses, to cultivate the silent or the noisy. There can be but little difficulty in this for a sensible man or woman who really wants to live in peace.

It was said of Bishop Creighton, who dearly loved quietness, that he "seldom went into Society without a groan."

One question which arises from this eager search for silence refuges, and which is distinctly arguable is, how far it is advisable to yield to the craving for them. We may humour our aversions until they become a veritable disease. And the more we consult our fears and fancies, the more we may. Nerves are ticklish organs, and need vigorous treatment, not coddling. At times, it is good to brave our dislikes, and go into battle, nerves and all, just to accustom them to conflict. As it is, some of us shy like a nervous horse, and are only too ready to yield to the fear of the moment, and so escape from the terror. But what sort of horse is he likely to be, who is allowed to go his own way, and not the trainer's? With judicious treatment, the nervous horse is taught to pass

many horrible objects, and to pass them without a quiver. Yet it is not by any humouring process, but by stern discipline, and by rendering the terrifying thing so familiar that his fears of it disappear. In fact, life is made for us by conquering our fears, and by taking the course of the brave and not that of the coward.

And so it may be with our dread of noise. We can, if we will, habituate ourselves to it, and discipline ourselves to bear it, until, by-and-bye, we do not mind it.

Then let us not forget that there is an *inward inhibition* possible to energetic souls. Have we ever analysed the reason why, at times, we are oblivious of noise and uproar? Is it not because at such times we are more preoccupied than at others? It is possible to lie awake listening for noises, and, when they come, as they are bound to do, to lie awake listening for more. In fact, we can easily spread our ears for noise, as the sails are spread to catch the breezes. It is here that the inhibition of the mind and the will comes in. We refuse "to lend our ears" for unworthy and uncomfortable sounds. We switch off the listening nerve. We divert the thoughts and imaginations into other channels. We give our minds something better to do; we become busy in other directions.

Some of us, it may be, are within sound of a twelve o'clock gun, and sometimes we hear it, and sometimes not. What makes the difference? It is not always because of the direction of the wind, or the condition of the

atmosphere. We do not hear it because we are not listening for it, or our thoughts are busy elsewhere. But if we had that gun upon our nerves, and feared its sound, and kept listening for it, we should hear it fast enough, and every day more painfully.

It is the idle minds which live, so to speak, upon the surface which are so susceptible to noise, and spend their days expecting to be jarred by earth's untoward sounds. They are not busy enough to be found heedless and unconcerned; and so, with pricked ears, they permit themselves to be assaulted unnecessarily.

Lastly, let me point out the *Christian refuge* from earth's painful noises. Religion is just a withdrawal from the superficial to the centre; away from the sensitive nerve to the inner being of the spirit. It is life at the centre with God. It is the exchange of the distraction of the jarred nerve for the "peace which passeth understanding." Amongst sedatives, the religion of Christ stands alone. The world's method is to try to work from without inwards, and its method fails, as it is bound to do. But the Christian plan is to begin at the centre, and work out to nerve and superficies. An ear at rest is not the highway to a heart at rest, as restless people are apt to imagine, but a heart at rest is the best means of inducing the ear to tolerate noises. It may not always be so, but it is likely that if people were cured of inner irritability and intolerance the existence of noisy surroundings would not matter.

CHAPTER XVII.

HEROIC SILENCE.

WE are all in love with the hero wherever we find him. It does us good to look at him, to read about him, to hear of his exploits. We recall, with quickened pulse, his example, and we would fain emulate him, if possible. Amongst the meannesses of human nature, which are many, we remember the occasional nobilities which have flashed upon the scene, and the hero seems almost to redeem our race from the stain of the feeble and the coward.

As a rule, we seek our hero on the battle-field, and, certainly, there he looms large and clear. With death hurtling around, he performs his great feats as if on a parade ground, and performs them nobly.

But peace has its heroes too, and, probably, the hero of the homestead is the greater, because he has played the man in cold blood, at greater lengths, and from deeper principle. On the stricken field, men are carried out of themselves, all hot with passion, but in the quieter and bloodless arena, heroism rises from the quiet and native depths of the man.

It is needful that this much should be said, since there are sure to be found some who will deny the possibility of the existence of heroes in silence. It is all the more necessary to lead up to them by such a claim.

There is, indeed, no sphere specially sacred to heroism, and it is to the credit of our nature that anywhere and everywhere the hero can be found, and in silence not the least worthy of his kind.

I am not concerned now with the cause for which our hero suffers. It will be sufficient for our purpose that he considers it good and worthy, and holds his tongue heroically in the stern stress. We may not approve of his silence, we may even think it misplaced, but this is not the question here. Heroism is to be sought in the hero's motive, not in our opinions of its worthiness.

Thus, the Spartan lad, who allowed the stolen fox, which he had concealed under his clothing, to tear out his very bowels rather than reveal the theft, was, from his countrymen's point of view, a hero, for they considered that a theft was only base when it was discovered. To a Spartan, then, the lad was a veritable hero.

At the same time, for a Christian people, the heroism of silent endurance is infinitely higher in a good cause than in a bad. The man who is silent for the sake of God and truth, and refrains from speaking because others would suffer as well as the truth, is a better hero far. The higher heroism must ever be the best.

Only the lower must not have its lower merit decried.

I need hardly point out how broad a field is that of silent heroism, and how history teems with eminent examples. Silent heroes have, indeed, played a larger part in life than the heedless world has perceived, and in chronicling some of them, we are only doing an act of justice. There may be heroic talkers, but, if we must draw a comparison, we are bound to relegate the talker to a very back seat in the gallery of heroes.

We will consider first *the silent hero in the sphere of religion*, where, indeed, we ought specially to find him.

There are indeed many silent cowards, who are silent from fear and policy, to save their own skins. Of these I cannot speak now, although much that is scathing might be said. I am thinking only of those who might have saved themselves by speech, but who kept their lips closed, and suffered for it.

Such were the brave souls, who, in days of persecution, refused to betray their friends and fellows, knowing that such betrayal would involve their imprisonment or even death. So, to save them, they kept silence, and never faltered even under torture. One word would have availed to save themselves, but that one word was kept back by the heroic spirit of love and fellowship.

When Savonarola was seized by his foes, the Pope at their head, for his accusations lashed them almost to madness, evidence was sought

to incriminate him and to give an air of justice to what had been foreordained, his death. With all the refinements of cruelty, of which they were past masters, the disciples of the bold reformer were pressed into the wicked scheme.

Brother Silvestro was a weakling, and admirably suited their purpose. He had fled into hiding when the storm broke, and the convent of St. Marco was attacked. But they dragged him forth, and in mortal fear he betrayed his master and Prior.

But Fra Domenico was of a different mettle, and stood his ground bravely. He dared the Pope and his myrmidons to do their worst, and utterly refused to say one little word to the detriment of his great and beloved master. They subjected Fra Domenico to the torture of the rack and the boot, but :—

"It was all in vain, for he remained as calm and unshaken as one of the early martyrs of the Church."

He would betray no one. And when, again and again, they applied the torture, until he was all shattered, and his arms hung useless from his sides, he spoke indeed, but it was only to lift up his voice in praises to the Lord his God :—

"I know no more," he cried, "for my sole concern has been to live a virtuous life with Jesus Christ as King of Florence. Thus, if not believing me, ye should even put me to torture anew, ye will discover no more, for there is naught else to be said, and ye will bring me nigh unto death."

So has it been in all persecutions for Christ's sake, by whomsoever the onslaught has been made. It is the silent who have borne away the trophies, and worn the crown. The lips may be but a little and feeble barrier between telling and not telling, but we have to take into consideration the spirit at the back of all, and it is here that the hero is born. For silence has spelt love, and inner endurance, and sacred principle of the purest, and disdain of suffering and death. It was in silence that the man was seen at his best, and it was his triumph that, despite the awful pressure, the lips were still.

One little prayer to the statue, one little pinch of incense, one little confession of allegiance to the strange divinity, and the terrors and the pain vanish. Such was the promise.

But still were the lips, except for the pressure of firmness and refusal, and the blow fell, the blow which opened all heaven to the Christian patriot. And so heroes and heroines, one after another, passed along the sorrowful way through fire and sword, into the glory of their Lord. Tender maidens and young lads, in whose hearts the love of life was strong, surrendered all for the mightier love of the Crucified.

Turn we now to *the silent hero on the battle-field.*

This is familiar ground, and it is to this blood-stained spot that our thoughts most naturally turn when we seek the hero.

The savage comes on with shouts and blood-curdling cries, because he is a savage. But the

brave man, from whose heart savagery has long gone, has learned to put the bridle on his lips, and to await the onslaught in silence. He is master of himself, and knows that in the hour of conflict silence is best.

But he is hard put to it at times when, held in leash so to speak, he quietly receives the storm of shot and shell with never a return. There is no greater test of courage than this weary waiting for the order to fire or to charge. It may seem hard, and he may not understand the why or wherefore, but he is content to believe that it is best so, and the trial is accepted silently.

He who is less than a hero may break rank and run, but the brave man is gathering his inner resoluteness into greater compactness all the time, and the foe knows well that, once the order is given, that mysterious silence will be transformed into an irresistible rush, which will bear all before it, for the longer the barrier that keeps the river back is down, the more the waters will rise, and, when the dam is lifted, the more vehement the charge of the waters. The silence is the silence of heroes.

There is a battle silence which is not uncommon, but whenever it comes is truly heroic; it is the silence of the wounded, while the battle is in suspense, especially the silence of the wounded Commander. There must be no discouragement of the men at this critical stage, and so the agony of the wound must be borne silently and concealed.

In the life of Sir Francis Drake, we are

allowed to see just such a silence as this. He and his men were attacking the Spanish town of Nombre de Dios, and the leader received a dangerous wound.

It was at a critical moment, when it was of the first importance not to discourage his followers, and so, although suffering terribly, he kept a rigid silence, and fought painfully at the head of his men. The news leaked out, however, and the siege was a failure. But the heroism was the same. And, though defeated for a time, such a glorious example went far in the next encounters to bring a victory under the splendid leader who could keep silence so nobly.

Admiral Nelson set a similar example, at the battle of Trafalgar, when, a shot from the battle-top of the French ship having pierced his spine, he fell in mortal agony. His first thoughts were for his men, and, lest they should be discouraged by the fall of their chief, he ordered his face to be covered, and had himself taken below, out of sight of his brave men. His silence was not the least of the causes which won so glorious a victory. And while we are proud of his naval powers, of his magnificent successes, and of his great courage, we also lay a wreath of praise on his grave for his heroic silence.

And many a humble private, too, has borne with silence the privations of some desperate campaign, hunger, thirst, sleepless nights, and stinging wounds, because he is a hero, and would rather die than murmur or complain. And so he puts a brave face on all, and none

can tell the desperate straits of the man from aught that he says or looks. He is a Spartan hero, little though he himself may think so.

I knew one brave lady, and saw a good deal of her at the end of her life, who, when in the siege of Lucknow she lost her husband, silently went out to care for the sick and dying, saying little of her own woes, but spending her days and nights in tender ministrations to others. They called her the Heroine of Lucknow, and she was apparently one of many such heroines.

Let us now think of *the silent heroes of the home.*

Perhaps it is not difficult to be a hero when the public eye is on us, and what we do heroically will be published in the newspapers. But in the home, behind the curtains, where no eye will ever see, and no ear ever hear, to be a hero is a different matter. The genuineness of that type is beyond dispute.

We think of the home with its grinning skeleton in the cupboard, known only to the members. The troubles which distract many a home few but the sufferers know, and their tongues are locked. They care not to display their skeletons. And yet it might be a relief to cry out now and then. But there are reasons for silence, and these prevail. And so, behind the trellis of roses, and the neat blinds, silent hearts inwardly moan, and give no sign.

Here, for instance, is a drunken husband, or wife, upon whom comes at times, only too frequent, the over-mastering passion for alcohol. Do we not all know some such ? Ministered to for a season, and permitted, until the spirit has

saturated the system, at last comes the struggle for victory. The drink is refused in spite of pleading cries, and whining entreaties, and even threats. For a time the craving is stilled, until the periodic season, when all has to be gone over again. And the suffering relations, what of them? Oh! they just keep a brave face, and give no sign, saying never a word. Yearning for sympathy, aching with the awful burden, the stricken ones keep a steady silence, anxious to cover the shame of the home. Is not such silence heroic?

Or take that other home tragedy which is no less hard to bear, the wild son, who plays the part of the prodigal in life.

He is a gay spark; he is bent on seeing life; he is a good fellow in the gay world which he frequents. And in his selfish and brutal career he turns night into day, and day into night, treading down the tender hearts which would gladly die for him. Mercilessly he spends the home funds, caring little who lacks, so long as he in his mad lust for life has sufficient. Mother and sisters slave for him, and, although living the life of the damned upon earth, say never a word. They do not complain, for it would give him away, and they are silent to save him from reproach. They square their shoulders, and tighten their lips, lest one incriminating word should slip out. It is such heroic silence as this which we may well call sublime.

Let me recall the story of that heroic father, who, in the French Revolution, took so glorious a part. His son it was who was condemned to

die, and, bearing the same name, he slipped into his place, and, when the summons came, went forth to die in his stead. The tumbril bore him rejoicing to his death, not the least heroic of the many whom the guillotine claimed. He said nothing; he just died in silence.

In the smaller spheres silence may come to the heroic, little as men think it possible. We think with pleasure of that little episode in the career of Lord Beaconsfield, who, when driving with his wife to the House of Commons, intent on delivering a great speech, knew not that his wife had trapped her finger in the carriage door. And she would not tell him, lest his coming oration should be spoiled. Silently she bore her agony, until the moment came afterwards to make it known.

And in smaller spheres still is this spirit of silent chivalry manifested. For the very children will adhere to their code of honour, and bear punishment, rather than tell of another. They bear their punishment with the same silence, upheld by the happy consciousness of having been kept true.

This was once the experience of Sir Henry Havelock when a boy. He saw a smaller boy being set upon by a bully, and, promptly interfering, drew down the wrath of the bully upon himself. With blackened eye, he proceeded to school, and was sharply interrogated on the cause of the disfigurement. He refused to throw any light on the matter, and was whipped for his supposed offence of fighting. A hero is not the less a hero for being small.

There is a heroic silence of *self-respecting pride*, which is worthy of chronicle.

It is for this reason that some are silent concerning their poverty. "Poor and proud" the world calls such as refuse, in their deep need, to stoop to the beggar's whine. These are the heroes among the poor. They would rather die than beg. And some do die, in very deed and truth. Have we not known such who, suffering from hunger, have dropped from exhaustion, and so revealed the dire straits in which they were? They counted their manhood and their independence better than life itself.

And some are silent about their sufferings, because they fear to sadden their friends, and perhaps become a burden on them. And so they silently let disease grow and ripen, even to death itself. It is not right, we may well confess, and yet, the heroism is none the less.

There is, moreover, a self-effacement, which is silent for the good of others. There have been parents who, fearing their children's career should be spoiled through the lowly origin from which they had sprung, have given never a sign that they were their parents, but have kept in the back-ground, silently content that their dear ones shone in another firmament than theirs. Such silence is as heroic as the silence of the children is shameful.

Notice too the heroisms of the *silence of restraint.*

To put our fingers to our lips when we would rather speak, and to do so because of the gain to others, is quite heroic silence.

When La Mère Angélique, the famous Abbess of Port Royal, lay dying, she was entreated by some to send messages to her absent friends. But she steadily refused:—

"I am silent from intention," she said, "I wish to prevent the possibility of such useless chatter as is customary on such occasions. They are made an excuse for talking."

And so, believing that what she might say would "provide an opening for the devil," she kept silent. And yet she would have loved to speak.

Such heroic restraint is seen in the silence of those who labour under an unjust suspicion, and who, if they only might, could clear themselves easily, but only by accusing others, who were the real culprits. Wishing to save and shield them, they have remained silent, letting the burden fall upon their own heads and hearts. Such restraint of love is not uncommon in life, and is notably heroic.

In war, this restraint is often seen, for it is a point of honour rather to die than disclose secrets which might compromise friends. "Tell or die" is often the ultimatum, and telling not they die gladly. And they think not that this silence of theirs is heroic.

"When did you last see your father?" is the well-known title of a picture, much beloved by all brave souls. In it the little straight Cavalier lad, placed on a hassock to lift his head above the table edge, and looking firmly into the eyes of his Roundhead interrogators, says never a word. There was no need for the

mother's entreating face begging him not to tell. It was not in him to betray his father, although he well knew where he was, and when he last saw him. The brave little soul shines out by his silence.

In ancient times there used to stand at the entrance to the Acropolis, so Plutarch tells us, a bronze lioness without a tongue. It was erected to the memory of Leaena, who, while not the best of women morally, had the fullest power over her tongue. Pressed to incriminate her friends in Athens, in a conspiracy to which she was privy, she refused, and bravely held out against all the threats and blandishments of her judges. Even torture failed to shake her constancy. She might have been like the tongueless lioness of the Acropolis for all the use she made of her tongue on that day:—

"For never any word spoken did so much good as many locked up in silence," said Plutarch.

We owe to Plutarch also the story of Zeno, who, "that he might not be compelled by the tortures of his body to betray, against his will, the secrets entrusted to his breast, bit off his tongue, and spat it in the tyrant's face."

I cannot better conclude this chapter than by telling over again the familiar story of the brave silence of Cordelia, as Shakespeare has bequeathed it to us, in his "King Lear."

King Lear, in his foolish dotage, would fain know which of his three daughters loved him most, as if love could ever be discovered by tame question and answer.

Goneril, glib of speech, and utterly loveless, answers for herself :—

"I love you more than words can wield the matter . . .A love which makes breath poor, and speech unable."

Regan is not less vociferous than her sister, and charms her father's ear with honeyed words of love.

And then came Cordelia's turn. She had listened to her voluble sisters, and had inwardly commented on their verbal richness. She had moreover mapped out her decision, "to love and be silent," saying to herself :—

"I am sure my love's more richer than my tongue."

"What can you say to draw a third, more opulent than your sisters ? " queried the foolish old man.

"Nothing," answered the honest soul.

Disappointed that his youngest and his dearest was so tongue-tied in the case of so precious a declaration, her father bids Cordelia try again, and outshine her sisters' "profession of love."

"Unhappy that I am," she cried, "I cannot heave my heart into my mouth."

"So young, and so untender," murmured Lear, as, with hot anger in his heart, and with lowering brows, he gazed on his silent child.

And then the inevitable fury fell on Cordelia, and, disowned and disinherited, she went forth an outcast from the Royal Court.

Faithful Kent would fain intervene, and stay the raging torrent of the father's wrath. He boldly calls the King to stop such folly :—

"Thy youngest daughter does not love thee least, nor are those empty-hearted, whose low sound reverbs no hollowness?"

But Kent's intercession is unavailing, and all that he gets for his pains is banishment and exile.

The tragedy deepens, as Burgundy, one of Cordelia's suitors, draws back from the now dowerless maiden and renounces her.

Poor Cordelia, thus stricken, communes with herself:—

"I want that glib and oily art to speak and purpose not, since what I well intend I'll do it before I speak."

And then she falls back on her integrity, conscious that, if she lacked the nimble tongue, she had within a dowry richer far than her more voluble sisters. All that she lacked was:—

"Such a tongue as I am glad I have not, though, not to have it, hast lost me in your liking."

Then the King of France stands forth as Cordelia's champion, giving forth the true solution of her silence:—

"It is but this, a tardiness in nature, which often leaves the history unspoke that it intends to."

Later, Cordelia dies, the victim of her heroic silence, and Lear's eyes, now at last open, an outcast too, realising that she was the one true, tender heart of all, murmurs sad recollection:—

"Her voice was ever soft, gentle and low, an excellent thing in woman."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE GREAT MODEL OF SILENCE.

THERE is only one, the supreme Model of all excellences, the Lord Jesus Christ. "Never man spake like this Man," was said of Him.

Never man was so silent as this Man, we might safely add.

Such a divine Model will be of peculiar worth to us as the example of One Who stepped down to our own level, that He might speak to us in language that we can understand.

He was tempted to over-speech as we are, but He succeeded in drawing the line between speech and silence to a hair. None distributed words and silence with such beautiful exactitude. And so we feel that we do well to sit at His feet to learn how to be silent.

We begin the study of that holy Example in the place where He spent His early life, the home in Nazareth. And here we see the silence of the home life. Here, with all submission, He was subject in silence to the authority of home. Obediently and cheerfully, He lived an uneventful life in His village home, playing the part of a good son and a good brother.

Misunderstood as He was, we know of no self-assertions. It was His place, and He filled it wisely.

As a workman, too, He held His peace, going forth to His daily task as one born to it. His daily work set for Him, His places of call arranged without His consent, He went and worked in all simplicity. No word of protest against menial labour. No sense of being degraded by such work. Rather a sense that in such ways He was doing His Father's business.

Those were the thirty years of silent, patient waiting. There at His lips were the great revelations pressing for utterance, but kept back for the auspicious moment when the hour should come. No mysterious and half disclosed hints were there, but a silence deep as death. No one could suspect that at the carpenter's bench stood the Son of Man, and that down the streets of Nazareth walked the Son of God.

Think of it, His great heart full to overflowing, His great mind overcharged with a glorious Gospel of Life, and yet all held in, and held back silently, until the signal should be given; a magnificent object-lesson of timely silence.

Then, also, there was the silence of withheld powers.

What great and stupendous things He could have done, if He would! But why should He, Who had no self to humour, no ambitions to indulge, forestall the moment? By-and-bye, they would be needed, and then the withheld powers should stream out for the world's good.

And so passed, day by day, the long thirty years, in which He held His peace, and said never a word but, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" That one utterance held true of all that He did, and suffered, and kept back, for the whole time of waiting. He was silent because it was His Father's will.

Then He opened His great ministry, and there stretched before Him a short life of energy, and suffering, and shame, and rejection.

Again, it is the silent Man Who emerges from that quiet home in the hills, and presents Himself before the world at the river bank, where John was fulfilling his ministry. John, who knew Him as his Master, shocked and humbled at His request for baptism, would have waved Him back, but "Suffer it to be so now" was His brief explanation, as he accepted the sinner's rite, that "he might fulfil all righteousness."

Thenceforward, except at rare intervals, He dealt scantily in speech, compressing much in little, preferring deeds to words. And this verbal economy is characteristic of His whole life.

Never did He say much, if little would do. His rule was pregnant brevity, saying all that was necessary, but nothing over. "Come," "Go," "Follow me," "Come and see," are examples of His common messages. Sometimes a gesture was better than a word, and He made it do its work.

Whole stretches of that Divine Life must have been spent in silence.

Those forty days in the wilderness, when the devil pressed Him sore, were silent weeks, broken by rebukes short and keen. Like all His utterances, they were weighed words with no surplus.

And very little do we know of those other forty days after the Resurrection, when He appeared in flashes, so to speak, dropped just the timely word, and vanished. Doubtless, the recorded words were not all, but, granted that more was said, they could not have been many, or where are the records ? His words were too precious to be spoken and forgotten. There were many gleaners, we know, and not much can have escaped their industry, especially at a time when ears were so keen and hearts so insistent for news and messages of light.

Now and again, in the course of His Ministry, we catch these weighty, suggestive silences, which were a real part of His messages.

When the stricken Syro-Phœnician woman sought His mercy for her daughter, "He answered her not a word." But His eyes spoke His deep sympathy all the same, so much so, that she returned undaunted to the charge.

There are silences, gruff, and hard, and repellent, but not so did she understand the silence of Jesus. She came in spite of it, and because of it, to His feet, until she obtained the boon which He alone could give. But it was with deepened humility and fuller faith that she came, because of the silence.

Equally significant was the silence which greeted the urgent message of the sisters of

Bethany, when Lazarus lay at the point of death, and they sought His presence:—"He whom thou lovest is sick."

And amid the silence the brother died. Later on, the meaning flashed forth, and their ebbing faith returned. It was no forgetfulness, no indifference, no mistake, just a calculated silence, sent forth to do a definite work of preparation. And when, out of the silence, He stepped forth as "the Resurrection and the Life," they knew. They had seen the rainbow in the cloud, and Jesus gathered a fuller and more divine aureole, because He had dared to be silent. They stood now on another and higher plane, and He with them, as a transfigured Saviour and Friend.

Just as studied and deliberate was the silence which faced the plotting Jews, when they dragged into His presence the erring woman, taken in the act. They loudly demanded the death penalty, and hoped so to entrap the Lord Jesus. They had not expected that stony, significant silence, and they did not like it. And when He lifted Himself from writing on the ground those unknown letters, and simply said, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her," and went on with His mysterious writing, one by one they slunk away, knowing full well that the net that they had laid had entrapped themselves.

The overmastering power of silence was once manifested in a startling fashion, when His townsmen at Nazareth sought to hurl Him over the edge of the cliff which skirted their city.

He had mortally wounded their pride by some home truths, and had aggrieved them by claiming to be a prophet. In their fierce anger they sought His life:—"But He passing through the midst of them went His way."

Apparently, it was all silently done. He passed through their dense ranks, and in some mysterious way they found themselves falling back, and letting Him through. It was the triumph of greatness, and purity, and calm. There was majesty in the silence, and a mystery which they could not but feel.

When the Lord girded Himself with the towel, and proceeded to wash the disciples' feet, it was probably in silence that He did it. It was to be an object-lesson, and all the more so from the absence of words. The speaking would come later. Peter, the precipitate, however, forced the utterance by his refusal, "Thou shalt never wash my feet." Silent example is at times better far than words.

The power of one silent look of the Lord is for ever memorable. It was when Peter, his face convulsed with passion and panic, denied his Master with curses, and denied Him thrice. Down in the court-yard, beside the fire of coals, stood the group of servants, and Peter amongst them. Above stood Jesus, battling with his foes.

It was another terrible burden for the Lord to bear, for He knew all that was happening, and heard every word and expletive. But He knew His man, knew him to the very depths, and shot down a look of love which found its

mark in the very centre of Peter's heart. Just one silent look; that was all. But that was enough to send the now penitent man out into the darkness, to weep, and moan, and pray. A triumph of silence this, penetrating, melting, and restoring to moral and mental equilibrium. That look was better than speech, for it set the thoughts to work in Peter's spirit, and churned up the old buried ideals.

But most significant of all the silences of the Lord were those which marked the closing scenes of His earthly life.

Here the silence which characterized all His life deepened, and again and again He played the part which the old prophecy had predicted of Him that "as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth."

It was the silent Man Who trod this sorrowful way, and held His peace amidst the uproar of hate and accusation. Smitten, scourged, falsely accused, spat upon, hurried from Court to Court, He passed silently on. He had said His say in life, and now nought remained but to die. It was but rarely that He opened His lips in those last terrible hours.

But amidst the general silence there were certain particular ones, which were so marked that the Evangelists singled them out for special mention. Deliberate and designed, silent when men might expect Him to speak, these silences startled the Christian men who chronicled the story, and so they passed them on to us.

Before Caiaphas, when arraigned as a criminal,

and when pressed to speak that He might incriminate Himself, He said nothing.

"Answerest Thou nothing?" angrily asked the High Priest.

"But Jesus held His peace."

That hall of injustice was no place in which to speak, for falsehood and murder sat there enthroned. Silence was the only reply to judges who were false to the core, and were bent on mocking every form of law in their religious hate. And so He looked steadfastly into the judge's eye with a silent significance, which was a judgment in itself.

Did Caiaphas quail under the quiet scrutiny of that clear eye? It seems like it, for we find him swiftly breaking in upon the silence with the words, "I adjure Thee by the living God." Then the Lord answered, and told His judge that by-and-bye his Prisoner would be found "sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." Their positions would be reversed then. This was enough for the murderous judge. He was "guilty of death" indeed.

It is not hard to see wherein the silences of Jesus before Caiaphas bring their lessons to us.

If it is of no good to speak, why employ words? If pleadings are known to be useless, why plead?

And what better than silence to convict the conscience of this hard man? To argue might lead to more arguments, but not to conviction. The silent look left him no foothold; the silent bearing left him to his own guilty thoughts.

Besides, silence consorted best with the Lord's greatness. He could not bandy words with malicious men, such as they were. Silence and dignity agree, but not dignity and wordiness. There is nothing demeaning in silence; there might easily be in speech.

And silence emphasized what the Lord inwardly felt, and did not disguise, the inevitableness of it all. Nothing could prevent what was sure to happen. If the issue were uncertain, words might be necessary; but not when the end was so certain. And so silence was best, because it expressed best His acquiescence and acceptance of what must be.

As it was with Caiaphas, so was it again when He stood before Pilate's tribunal. This was an even more serious trial, for only here could He be truly and finally condemned.

"Art Thou the King of the Jews?" demanded Pilate of his Prisoner, and the quick reply came in the affirmative, "Thou sayest," for here speech was essential.

But when the chief priests and elders began their clamour, witnessing against Him, He lapsed into silence again. He would not meet clamour with clamour.

"Hearest Thou not how many things they witness against Thee?" urged the governor.

"But He answered him to never a word."

Here was something new in Pilate's experience, a prisoner on trial for his life making no pleading, and letting judgment go by default. He marvelled greatly.

But we do not wonder, knowing what we

know. To reply would be a sheer beating of the air. And who can answer the charges of malice? Pilate was not ignorant of the envy which moved them, and so required no enlightenment. It was better to leave them to themselves. Besides, in the heart of the Saviour there dwelt a quiet confidence that His cause was in His Father's Hands, and was better there. He could not fight and struggle as one who feared that it might be lost if He did not assert Himself. Moreover, there was something better to Him than His own salvation, and that was the salvation of a lost world. So He was silent.

Once again was the Lord silent before Pilate, in His final trial. Sure of His innocence, the governor laboured hard to set Him free, but device after device failed to secure an acquital. It was then that the Jews shewed their hand, and demanded His death, because "He made Himself the Son of God."

Here was another problem for the governor, and one which troubled his soul not a little. "Whence art Thou?" he asked eagerly, anxious to get to the bottom of this new feature.

"But Jesus gave Him no answer."

This silence roused the mighty Roman official to say angrily, "Speakest thou not unto me. Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify Thee, and have power to release Thee"?

It is ever the way with weak men to vaunt their strength when on the verge of a great betrayal. This very boast was proof of a coming surrender. And the Lord knew it.

"Thou couldst have no power at all against Me, except it were given thee from above; therefore he that delivered Me unto thee hath the greater sin."

And all this reveals the secret of the Lord's silence before Pilate. Could speech effect the result now? Not the least. Pilate was but a puppet in the hands of others. So silence was best.

And there was a higher Hand at work in the midst of all, achieving great things for a world at enmity with Him.

One other significant silence marks that last hour, namely, the silence before Herod. Pilate had sent off his inconvenient Prisoner to Herod in the hope that he might relieve him of a disagreeable duty. A Galilean judge for a Galilean Man.

And Herod grasped at the opportunity with avidity. He thought that he might be treated to some new sensation, which would stimulate his jaded nerves, for he had long wished to be brought face to face with Jesus. And the chance had come.

We see the Prisoner now before the new judge, who "questioned with Him in many words." "But He answered him nothing."

What could He say to the murderer of His great forerunner? Was he a fit subject for one single word? He was worthy only of silence; just steady silence.

And was the Lord of Life to play the entertainer to this wicked king? Was it likely? His silence gave the answer.

A Herod ought to know what a pure, true Man thought of him and his ways. And so the Lord fixed him with a gaze, which must have penetrated and hurt, bringing back to his memory that other true man, who dealt faithfully with him, and, at a wanton's call, was sacrificed.

In that silence Herod might read clearly what a greater than John the Baptist adjudged him to be, a man unworthy of a word, a man who, by all pure souls, must be treated as reprobate and vile.

And that Herod read the lesson seems clear from the mean revenge he wrought upon his Prisoner, setting his men of war against the Lord, and subjecting Him to every indignity that his menials could suggest. But that, too, He met with silence.

Herod sent the Lord back again to Pilate, to Pilate's great disgust, we may be sure. Herod's dealings with men of God had not been a great success. John and his death haunted him. And now another sting was planted in his conscience by that silent Man of Nazareth. He wanted to see fireworks, and he met with scorching fire instead.

Henceforth all is silence, except for those seven brief words as He hung upon the cross, seven words of prayer and crying in three long hours. Silently He lived ; silently He died.

And what can we do better than follow in His steps ?

CHAPTER XIX.

THE BIBLICAL MUSEUM OF SILENCE.

SEEKERS as we are for light upon the path of silence, and for the best and most authoritative guidance, we can scarcely turn away from that best of books, the Bible. Here we may expect to find illustrations of the highest value. Here we may surely discover principles of the purest nature. Here, seeing how human nature is set forth in all its lights and shades, we are certain to light on examples made ready to our hand. In fact, the Bible is a deep and productive mine in which students of silence may wisely dig with the surest of results.

It is not necessary to be exhaustive in our treatment, for time and patience rebel against any too minute inspection of the many instances in which silence is mentioned. We must try to group as much as possible, and seek to discover the spirit rather than the letter.

We turn then first to the strong, silent men, who appear in its history, and who did great things rather than spoke of them.

Moses, the great Lawgiver, was a man "slow of speech, and of a slow tongue," (Exodus iv., 10)

as he himself confesses, and when the great commission came to him from God, fearing that this slowness of utterance might be a hindrance, he begged that another might be chosen instead. Like many silent men, he deemed speech, free and eloquent, an essential for so great a work, not realising that it is just such a man whom the Great Master could trust best to utter His words. And, indeed, silent men are ever more usable than garrulous ones with their free tongues and exuberant imaginations. Having Moses' history before us, we know now how, underneath the silent exterior, there burned hidden fires, and how, amidst the outer quiet, the great mind wrought out a people's deliverance.

Even he broke down once upon a time, "spake unadvisedly with his lips," (Psa. cvi. 33) and suffered for it.

His brother, Aaron, the man of eloquent lips, was indeed a partner in his great exploits, but quite subordinate. Good as a mouthpiece, he had not the staying power, and in great emergencies showed that he was the weaker man. It was Aaron who made the golden calf, not being strong enough to resist the pleadings of the people who waited impatiently for the reappearance of Moses from the Mount.

But then we must remember that there came a moment in Aaron's life, when he looked down upon his two dead sons smitten by God for their sacrilege and sin, and, heeding the command, "held his peace," (Lev. x. 3) acquiescing in the justice of the deed. If the strong man

can break down and speak unwisely, contrary to all precedent, so the weak man, with quite opposite tendencies, can be still and silent.

King Saul, who began so well and ended so badly, shewed on one occasion, at least, a skilful and wise reticence. Anointed by Samuel to be King, he went home to Gibeah, and met with a mixed reception, as might be expected. "And there went with him a band of men whose hearts God had touched. But the children of Belial said, How shall this man save us? And they despised him, and brought him no presents. But he held his peace," (I Sam. x. 26, 27) like the strong man, who knew that "the least said, the soonest mended."

Nehemiah, the great statesman, understood well the value of a silent tongue, and practised it.

Follow him on his midnight journey around the ruined city of Jerusalem, to see for himself the true condition of things. Appointed to rebuild the sepulchres of his fathers by the fiat of the great King, he knew how a word might spoil all, and so he went secretly to work, and in silence completed his plans:—

"And the rulers knew not whither I went, or what I did; neither had I as yet told it to the Jews, nor to the priests, nor to the rulers, nor to the rest that did the work." (Neh. ii. 16.)

And when the taunts hurtled round the builders, and the foes did their best to stop them, silently the work proceeded, and all that was heard was the soft word of prayer, uttered to the God of heaven.

Mary, the blessed Virgin, stands amongst the

silent, strong souls of the world, as an example to the Church. In the great happenings of those great days in which she played her indispensable part, she broke speech but seldom, and then only in praise. No doubt, it was an inscrutable mystery to her, as to us. But her faith carried her through, for she was content to do the Father's will, in the Father's way:—

"But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart" (Luke ii. 19).

And so later, when the wondrous child developed before her eyes, and amazed her by his words:—"They understood not the saying which he spake unto them. . . . But his mother kept all these sayings in her heart." (Luke ii. 50, 51.)

She could speak unadvisedly with her tongue, as we all do, but that was an exception. Her rule was silence when she could not understand; a readiness to wait until the light came; until all was clear. She was content not to know for a season.

It does not require a lengthened study of the Old Book to see that the problems of to-day were the problems of the earlier ages as well. They met with the same difficulties as we do, and suffered the same torments from the tongues of their fellows. We are no wiser, not a bit, and the maxims of the ancients stand us in good stead at the present moment.

Do we find it difficult to restrain our speech? So did they. And only the wise succeeded in achieving it.

"The mouth of the just bringeth forth

wisdom," (Prov. x. 31) the proverb reminds us, and so emphasizes the close connection between the heart and the lips. The better the man, the better the word.

And when no wisdom is found, then the tongue runs away, and tattles. "A talebearer revealeth secrets." (Prov. xi. 13.)

But, mostly, we shall shew our wisdom by silence, for "a man of understanding holdeth his peace." (Prov. xi. 12.) In this sense, certainly, "the tongue of the wise is health." (Prov. xii. 18.)

So much so is this fact true concerning the silent tongue, that even a fool can by its means gain a reputation for wisdom. "Even a fool when he holdeth his peace is counted wise." (Prov. xvii. 28.) But, mostly, "the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness." (Prov. xv. 2.)

That a "wholesome tongue is a tree of life" (Prov. xv. 4) the proverbial philosopher was convinced.

But there was no attempt to run silence and speech as rivals. Each had its own special sphere, where each shone. If more stress was laid on silence than on speech, it was because it was more difficult and rare. The truth was, as it is to-day, that "there is a time to keep silence, and a time to speak." (Eccles. iii. 7.)

In the Psalms we find a rich depository of truth concerning speech and silence, and all set forth as living realities. The various writers tell us of their trials and problems, and shew us the part which each played in their sad or glad experiences.

We see the saints writhing under the lash of hostile tongues, and crying to God in their misery:

"His mouth is full of cursing, deceit and fraud, under his tongue is mischief and vanity." (Psa. x. 7.)

"With flattering lips, and with a double heart, do they speak." (Psa. xii. 2.)

They are brought before us as having a tongue which "deviseth mischiefs like a sharp razor," (Psa. lii. 2.) who "whet their tongue like a sword, and bend their bows to shoot their arrows, even bitter words." (Psa. lxiv. 3.)

We are not surprised that the burdened Psalmist should pray eagerly, "Deliver me . . . from the hand of strange children; whose mouth speaketh vanity." (Psa. cxliv. 7, 8.)

The perils of this biting, snapping speech are set down, too, for to men who could say, "There is not a word in my tongue but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether," (Psa. cxxxix. 4) the penalties of unbridled speech were certain. And so we read:—"The Lord shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaketh proud things." (Psa. xii. 3.)

Then we see them running for shelter from the hailstorm of words to the one secure place provided:—

"Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man; thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues." (Psa. xxxi. 20.)

That they did not consider themselves exempt from over-speech is clear from such a prayer as this:—

"Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer." (Psa. xix. 14.)

The Psalmist's devices to turn the edge of the trouble are worthy of notice, and may prove a guide for ourselves.

He tried not to be too keen in listening, and sought a little healthy deafness and hardness of hearing:—

"But I, as a deaf man, heard not, and I was as a dumb man that openeth not his mouth." (Psa. xxxviii. 13.) This inward insensibility is a thing to be cultivated.

And he ever tried to drown his trouble in prayer.

He was keen, too, on cultivating a resolute spirit, keeping back the erring word of complaint, when the enemy pressed him hardest. This was his resolution:—

"I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me." (Psa. xxxix. 1.)

And, for a time, all went well:—"I was dumb with silence, I held my peace, even from good," (Psa. xxxix. 2) which was overdoing it somewhat.

But the barriers broke, and then we find him saying, "My heart was hot within me; while I was musing the fire burned: then spake I with my tongue." (Psa. xxxix. 3.) But it was not until the danger had passed, and, when he spoke, it was to God in prayer.

One praiseworthy bit of silence must be recalled, spelling, as it did, such splendid submission:—"I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because Thou didst it." (Psa. xxxix. 9.)

One guilty bit of silence he tells us of, when, having sinned against the Lord, he withheld his confession, and sought to hide his sin. But he suffered for it not a little:—

"When I kept silence, my bones waxed old," (Psa. xxxii. 3) and he had no peace until, as he said, "I acknowledged my sin unto Thee." (Psa. xxxii. 5.)

One type of silence he strongly deprecated, and that was the silence of God towards himself:—"Unto thee will I cry O Lord, my Rock; be not silent to me; lest, if Thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit." (Psa. xxviii. 1.) To lose touch with God, to be untouched by God, to feel oneself outside the divine sphere, can produce nothing but misery.

The types of silence are well represented in Holy Scripture, and we cannot do better than pass a few under review.

The silence of *sympathy* is well represented by the friends of Job, who gathered round the stricken man, as he lay in his agony, to express by silence what words failed them to convey:—"They had made an appointment together to come to mourn with him, and to comfort him." (Job ii. 11.)

Poor Job was almost unrecognisable in his disfigurement, and when they saw him they "lifted up their voice and wept," (Job ii. 12)

and, in Eastern fashion, "rent everyone his mantle, and sprinkled dust upon their heads toward heaven." (Job ii. 12.)

Then they let their sympathy flow in silence:—

"So they sat down with him upon the ground, seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him: for they saw that his grief was very great." (Job ii. 13.)

The book of Job furnishes another type of silence, the silence of *respect and reverence.* In his depths of misery the patriarch drew from his bright past some consoling thoughts, but sad ones too, when he dwelt on the great contrast between the past and the present. He recalled the days when, as the great man of his city, all did reverence at his appearance in their midst:—

"When I went out to the gate through the city . . . the princes refrained talking, and laid their hand on their mouth. The nobles held their peace, and their tongue cleaved to the roof of their mouth." (Job xxix. 9, 10.)

And again:—

"Unto me men gave ear, and waited, and kept silence at my counsel. After my words they spake not again." (Job xxix. 21, 22.)

If, as men say, the spirit of reverence is dying out, and one man is as good as another and better, and a general levelling down is the ambition of the age, then this silence of the old princes in the presence of Job will seem despicable. But if superiorities really exist, and some excel others in goodness, dignity and mental power, then we do well to cultivate

this same silence of reverence before these higher natures.

How much more ought we, however, to be silent before the Highest of all, according to Zechariah's counsel:—"Be silent, O all flesh, before the LORD, for he is raised up out of His holy habitation." (Zech. 2. 13.)

The silence of *conviction* also finds a place, as we might expect, in our great museum of silences, for where clamour reigns confusion is at work. St. Peter, dealing with the rebellion of the foolish, and the right method of bringing them to submission, insists on the necessity of a good life to secure this change:—"For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." (I Pet. ii. 15.)

The argument of a good life is unanswerable, for what works well in right living must have truth for its base.

The silence of *reception* is one strongly commended and commanded by St. Paul, in his exhortations to Timothy.

He is bidding the women Christians of his day be womanly, and telling them how to be so in their dress, ornaments and behaviour. A good life, he reminds them, is far preferable to a good outside appearance.

Above all, the woman is to "learn in silence, with all subjection."

He had a horror of a forward woman, pressing to the front, and raising shrill noises in the assemblies:—

"I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp

authority over the man, but to be in silence." (I Tim. ii. 11, 12.)

When we recall the times, and the common customs of Eastern lands, we can well enter into St. Paul's motive, for nothing would serve the Church and its mission less than to shock public sentiment, and to affect a superiority which they had not yet proved. It was no question of bridling woman's influence, of refusing her an outlet, or of denying to her special gifts, but simply to prevent outraging public opinion, sensitive to a degree on such matters. In that age she could serve God better by quietness and retirement than by standing in the glare of the footlights. So did Phœbe the deaconess; so did Priscilla the wife of Aquila.

We all have much to learn, and it behoves all learners to sit still at the Lord's feet, and to drink in silently the words of truth and life. Absorption is the certain result of silent listening.

We have an excellent example of the silence of *reserve* in the crusade of Sennacherib against Judah in the time of Hezekiah.

The great King's lieutenant stands before the walls of Jerusalem, and harangues in his lofty way the agents of Hezekiah, who look down from the top of the wall. Rabshakeh put his points admirably, and was, apparently, as good an orator as a fighter. But he was met with blank silence:—

"But the people held their peace, and answered him not a word." (II Kings xviii. 36.)

It was no part of Hezekiah's policy to indulge in a wordy warfare at such a critical time:— "The King's commandment was, saying, Answer him not." (II Kings xviii. 36.)

For silence gives no handle to your foe, and leaves him puzzled. Silence shows a calm and courageous front, and, at least, reveals the fact that threats do not disturb you. Silence spells strength, and an assurance of relief from somewhere. With Hezekiah it meant that he was trusting in One stronger than Sennacherib, and that, for all Rabshakeh's bold talk, his master would be dealt with in God's good time. The man of faith can always afford to be silent.

What Hezekiah did later the Israelites were exhorted to do in one of their critical experiences after the escape from Egypt. With the Red Sea rolling before them, and the pursuing Pharaoh and his great host behind them, it seemed impossible that any escape could come. And the slave rabble, for they could have been at that time nothing else, felt it so acutely that they cried out in their utter panic:—

"Fear ye not," said the calm and resolute Moses, "stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord."

And then he gave his reason:—"The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace." (Ex. xiv. 13, 14.)

And so in silence the crowd passed on, awed into quietness, and the way opened before them to deliverance and victory.

God's Word provides also more than one example of the silence of *shame* when, rebuked

CHAPTER XX.

TYPES OF SILENCE.

AMONGST the universal languages which the world knows none is so universal and speaking as silence. Everywhere men and women use it, and find it of inestimable value in their communications one with another. It is primeval language, which nobody need learn, and, so long as the world lasts, and perhaps beyond, its voice will be heard.

Its one disadvantage is that it leaves open the possibility of mistake to the less expert. For so much depends upon the interpreter. A malicious man will interpret maliciously. A kind man will see something kind in it. But, given a genuine love of truth and a genuine charity, the right interpretation will be given. There must be a twist in a man's nature if a twist be given to some quite harmless silence. Indeed, we may, if we will, discover a man's inmost nature by seeing how he generally interprets others' silence. It is fallacious people who are guilty of what I have called elsewhere fallacies of silence.

Of course, with all our expertness and charity, we may make mistakes and misinterpret silence,

but I do not think that our mistakes will ever be very bad ones if we lean to virtue's side.

What a revelation, for instance, is brought to us in *the silence of indignation!* In the highest pitches of anger, when it is white-hot, it often takes the silent form. We have seen a man "speechless with indignation," and unable to utter a word, try as he may. "His feelings are too many for him," we say. Like a large bottle with a small vent, the pressure behind is so vehement that the flow is checked from sheer incapacity. And so he splutters, and becomes dumb, because he can do nothing else. Perhaps it is just as well that nature has stepped in to make him voiceless, for think what he would be likely to say if he could. No man will be more glad a little later on, when the mood has passed, that he was powerless, than this same wild spirit. What a fierce man can say, no ears care to listen to. The incapacity to speak is nature's plug, to stop the wild rush, and to dam the ugly flood.

Allied to this type of silent speech is the *silence of sullenness.*

Sullenness could utter words if it would, but it refuses. It takes this special form, because all men know exactly what it means, and it means exactly what it is intended to convey. It is calculated temper.

"I want no dealings with you. I do not think you are worthy of a single word. I cast you out of my affections; out of my life. Go, and shrivel up in a corner."

This sullen silence is brother to a non-erupting

Then a note of almost despair creeps into his words, as he thinks of its untameableness:—

"Every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, . . . hath been tamed of mankind: but the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison." (Jas. iii. 7, 8.)

But the tongue has its good side; if it can curse, it can bless also "God, even the Father." (Jas. iii. 9.)

What is to be done? Surely, to purify the stream at the fountain head, and to see that the source be pure and divine. A man talks according to his nature. From a thistle you get thistles; from a fig tree, figs, sweet and luscious:—

"Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded." (Jas. iv. 8.)

"Receive with meekness the engrafted word." (Jas. i. 21.)

And, indeed, words are cured by the divine Word of Life, which impels us to do rather than say; to be really "doers of the Word." (Jas. i. 22.)

There is one momentous silence, of which we read in the Book of Revelation, which has impressed the imagination, and exercised the ingenuities, of Christian men in all times:—

"And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour." (Rev. viii. 1.)

Many have been the attempts to unravel the

significance of this silence, so mysterious and so unexpected.

To one expositor it has signified just a suspension of revelation. To another it was intended to be a prelude to further horrors, and to usher them in. Still another has seen in it merely a great contrast to the loud praises which preceded it.

Canon Charles, in his book on the Apocalypse, considering that the second verse is an interpolation, detects in the silence a solemn hush in the praises of the heavenly host "in order that the prayers of the suffering saints on earth may be heard before the Throne of God."

He fortifies his contention by a reference to the Talmud, in which it is stated that companies of angels praise by night, but are silent by day, "because of the glories of Israel," i.e., that the praises of Israel may be heard in heaven.

And, certainly, it is like Him Who pities and loves to make a space, and to cry a Hush, in order that the weakest may be heard in their plaintive supplications.

Moreover, it conveys the salutary lesson for praising saints to lay to heart, lest in their joyous tumult they may drown the voices of the sad. They may be selfish even in their praises. Let no one be so taken up with their own visions and praises as to forget the suffering ones who sigh and cry. "Silence for the space of half an hour" now and then is good for us, as well as for them. We shall praise all the better for it afterwards.

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volcano, which only smokes, and throws up a few sparks to show what it is capable of, and smokes on. A smoking volcano is not a beautiful object.

Unlike the silent, spluttering indignation, it lives long, and is not soon over. "It nurses its wrath to keep it warm."

The sullen person will pass you on the stairs with never a word, sit silently at the table, and receive your advances with the same stony silence.

But what the voice does not express, the face, attitude, and eyes are full of. There is sullenness in every turn of the body, and in every flink of the head. He, or she, exudes sullenness.

By-and-bye, it will wear itself out, and slowly, slowly disappear.

A member of the same disagreeable family of silences is the *silence of disapprobation.* Yet there may be quite a nice spirit connected with it, and often is. But, to the sufferer from it, it is not a pleasant silence, and especially if it be undeserved.

Taken superficially, it is simply the withholding of praise for something said or done. "I don't approve," the silence is intended to convey. And we all shall agree that if we disapprove of any action, and cannot well say so, the silent method is a good one.

Besides, we are not, many of us, capable of balancing our words accurately. We are apt either to say too much, or too little. Silence balances itself, and enables the culprit to weigh it all out in the conscience.

Then it has an advantage in the refinement of it. Words are likely to be coarse, and, like delicate chemicals weighed with a spoon, they fail of accurate precision. But silence soaks in deep, fills the crevices, and is nicely adapted to the offence.

Of course, with the silent disapprobation, there will be found the appropriate expression of the whole bearing, combined with the silence to make a disciplining mixture.

To those who believe in occasional rows, and consider that storms clear the atmosphere, this type of silence will hardly commend itself. Their disapprobation will be of a violent type, and will cast desolation around in abundance. I question, however, whether it is likely to be either just or effectual. Besides, its reaction upon the disapprover will not be of a comforting kind. Storms may be useful in nature, but human nature proves, as a rule, more amenable to gentler instruments.

Just as unmistakeable in its interpretation is *the silence of contempt*, which is, alas! a silence only too common. It brands the silent perpetrator as well as the often silent victim.

And when contempt takes this silent form, it is doubly distilled in its intention and venom. It is contempt at its highest, and bitterest.

It would seem that this form of silent rebuke cannot be so easily interpreted as many another, and may miss fire. But, as a matter of fact, it carries its own meaning with it, marked in plain figures on face and head, and indeed the whole bearing. All is contemptuous.

The bearing gives the tone; the silence gives the expression.

It would be a mistake, however, to say that all contemptuous silence is malicious. It is not. It is sometimes a dignified way of ignoring some assailant, who, we say, is "beneath contempt." And dignity certainly treats itself best when it takes refuge in silence. To return railing for railing is not good Christian form, and a self-respecting man consults his own dignity best by letting the offender drop into his own pitfall.

But contemptuous silence may easily run into abuse and sin, and too often does. We may despise and hate another for what, we may fancy, is unwarranted interference, and we may let our dislike and resentment take the form of personal contempt and scorn, not the less scornful, because it is silent, and only backed by a curled lip, or an elevated chin.

Moreover, there is a contempt which springs from a fancied superiority, and which looks down, as from a great height, on something eminently slimy and worm-like. This silence of contempt is more contemptible than the imagined offence.

Distrust is a condition of mind which silence best expresses and, indeed, only can express properly.

We have nothing definite to go upon; we have heard nothing to a person's detriment; we have only an undefined feeling that we had better not give ourselves away. So we take refuge in silence, as the best resource for our incommunicable state of mind.

Were we to try to express ourselves, we should probably go too far, and commit ourselves beyond remedy. But, being only a suspicion, we must hold our tongue, and wait for future disclosures. Time will either confirm our fears, or will disperse them. Meanwhile, we say nothing.

A stranger would not understand our silence, but those who know us will. And it is only for them, and ourselves, that we keep silence at all. For all outsiders know, this reserve may be our usual way, and they think nothing of it; but those who know us better, are not deceived; they know that we have not yet reached the trusting level. We are in doubt, and scent the untrustworthy. Perhaps it is best in this uncertain world to refrain from too rapid friendships. It is better to hold back at first than to rush in, and then have to step back. It is not given to all to reckon up character in a flash of intuition, like dogs and children.

Of course, if silence is too long sustained, and is unbroken after longer acquaintance, it tells its own tale and cannot be hid, for with those we trust there are no reserves.

Still, we must not be too ready to suspect distrust from the silent, for, after all, it may mean something quite different. Suspicion is a poor inmate, and had better be ejected summarily.

There is one type of silence which is easily read by those who have been silent from the same cause, and that is the *silence of nervousness*, the timorous silence.

Some uncharitable persons misread it, and interpret it as pride and haughty scorn for an inferior. It is always a pity to put a bad construction on a mood, when we can so easily put a good one. It is really, in most cases, sheer nervousness.

People with iron nerve cannot understand an attack of nerves, and imagine it to be impossible. But nerves are commoner than we suspect. Indeed, of all the causes of silence, the shrinking nerve must be set down as the prime one.

It is not that there is anything to breed fear and inward shrinking, but it is simply that, with a quivering, nervous constitution, they are paralysed who would fain speak, and lose control of their powers of mind and body. Shrinking from publicity, filled with a sense of their own unimportance, and alarmed at hearing their own voice, they subside into silence as the only refuge.

It is no matter for laughter, but for supreme pity, for of all known diseases there is none more full of tragedy than this. It must be humoured more or less, and the more tact we possess, and the more inner kindness, the better shall we be able to set the nervous at ease, and get the best out of them. Your rough, hearty, coarse man, had better let the nervous alone; he will only succeed in rasping the soul, and scarifying the whole inner man.

But one thing I must say. It will not do for the sufferer to be too yielding to himself. The nerve attack, like a nettle, must be firmly grasped, and some force must be put on

himself to keep down the too silent, shrinking tendency.

The *silence of reserve* is so much like other silences, that it may be easily misunderstood. For not all reserve is calculated, or the manifestation of nervousness. Much of it is a natural disposition to reserve, due to a wish to keep oneself to oneself, and not caring to be too sociable. It is the opposite of that expansive nature, which is always gushing, and gushing to everybody.

Perhaps it is just as well that this natural reticence is not too common, or life would become a little dull. Unsociable people are not the best of company, and distinctly add to the world's gloom. If we begin to grub at the roots of this reserve, we shall find a variety of causes other than mere natural disposition.

It was said of Augustus that he was careful not to say more than he intended, even to his wife, and that he wrote down everything beforehand. We can understand this caution in an Emperor, but we lesser luminaries have not quite the same reason for care, except when we are in the presence of enemies who are waiting to catch at a word.

Sometimes this reserve comes from a slowly working mind. Not quick to catch an idea, or to revolve it, this slowness is bound to reflect itself in a somewhat prolonged silence which will not be broken until the hand stands at the hour. By that time the conversation has described another revolution, and the auspicious

moment has passed. So, being nearly always behind, the silence deepens more and more. This solves the problem of some men's reserve.

Then in some there is a large measure of lethargy, which cannot rouse itself to take the trouble to talk, and this, joined with a want of interest, will silence any man's tongue. The inwardly lazy man is not, as a rule, much of a talker. His silent intervals are sure to be large. Perhaps also there is an idea in the silent one's mind, that it is more decorous to show no sign of special interest, and that, having a position to keep up, it can best be done by silence. If to be too interested in anything is thought to be ill-bred, we can well understand why some are so silently reserved.

Persons of high dignity are often reservedly silent. They seem to think that their position demands silence. David Garrick tells us of a painful silence which marked the King and Queen's attitude, when once he read before them. There was no applause ; no sign of approbation or disapprobation; just stony silence :—

" Everybody watched to see what the King thought. It was reading to a number of wax-work figures. And he who had been accustomed to the applause of thousands could not bear this assembly of mutes."

All this reserve is hardly " playing the game." It is not giving as good as you get. It throws everything social into a one-sided groove, which is neither good for one nor the other. It is quite right not to make oneself cheap, but why

should we go to the other extreme, and make ourselves too dear? And the reason often lies in a cold-blooded, cynical selfishness.

Admiration is another sentiment which is likely, in its stronger forms, to generate silence as its only medium.

In its intensest form, when words fail us, and we search in vain for adjectives sufficiently large to tell its fulness, we are obliged to fall back upon silence. We become "silent with admiration."

An exquisite picture, an eloquent oration, a bewitching landscape, a perfect song, will appeal to us in such a supreme fashion that we make no attempt to say how much, but leave it to be imagined from our silence.

Most of us can remember the time when we tried to put such admiration into words, and we remember, too, how dissatisfied we were with our feeble words of praise. Words sufficiently expressive had not been invented, and we were sorry that we tried to speak at all.

In fact, he who is able to say how much he admires has not reached the fullest pitch of admiration yet. It is a stage further on that the speechless experience comes. This is why we feel not a little outraged when men and women chatter in the midst of beautiful scenery, good music and high art, even when they chatter their admiration, because we know how superficial it all is and how unreal.

Charles Kingsley supplies us with an illustration of this silence of admiration. During his visit to Canada he was taken to see the Falls

of Montmorency, near Quebec, "the most awful and beautiful thing I saw."

"I looked on in silence" he said.

To a friend, who left him alone to see the spectacle, he wrote:—

"Thank you. You understand me. I would as soon a fellow talked and shouted to me in church as in that presence."

Later on he visited Niagara, and wrote to his wife:—"I long for you to sit with me and simply look on in silence whole days at the exquisite beauty of form and colour."

Some silences are pleasant ones, and we would like to repeat them often. Others are decidedly unpleasant, and we cannot have too few of them. Among these latter are those we call *awkward silences*.

We quite understand these silences, for we have all experienced them. Not only are they awkward, but we are awkward in the face of them. In fact, we are for the time put into a tight corner, and do not know how to get out. And, because we do not know what to say, we hold our tongues, and can do nothing else.

Sometimes we are asked difficult questions, which we would prefer not to answer. If we said anything we should commit ourselves, or others, hopelessly. We would fain turn the question away, but we know not how. And so we relapse into speechlessness.

A child will sometimes, in his artlessness, corner us, and ask something which reduces us to an awkward silence.

At times in Society, perhaps at table, there has fallen upon the whole company a silence which can be felt. How it comes nobody knows. It has just happened so. And when it comes, host and hostess and guest feel the awkwardness of the moment.

There is an awkward silence when people meet who are not friendly to one another. Neither will speak, and the silence which ensues is distressing. It needs a smart hostess to turn that ugly corner.

Perhaps, if people did not mind lying, or had nerves of steel which nothing could disturb, or were crammed full of ingenuity and tactfulness, these silences would be less awkward; but, unfortunately, most of us fail at such junctures to say just the right and reassuring thing. Nerves have a knack of vanishing when they are most wanted, and the word which, in our leisure, comes to us rapidly, is nowhere to be found when we are in the very face of the dilemma. A horrid silence is all that is left.

There are awkward silences sometimes in Courts of Justice, when a witness or a prisoner is being examined, and, jibbing at some incriminating question, he refuses to answer. Of course his silence is awkward for him, because he has given himself away. His silence is read as plainly as his speech.

As a rule it is awkward people who put us in deep holes, for had they had the smallest modicum of tact, and the least bit of imagination, they would have refrained from creating an unpleasant situation. But there will be

blunderers in life, so that we cannot expect other than awkward silences now and then.

Another inexpressible thing is *love*, at least in its deeper layers. Perhaps of all types of silence it is the most distinct and expressive.

We hear sometimes of the eloquence of love, and it is true if you are thinking of love which lies too deep for words, love which must be silent because words fail to tell its realities. In silence is love's best and most real medium. And for all its inaudibility it is the most legible.

A look, a hand-clasp, tell the story clearly and effectually, indeed far better than a flood of words. And even when these are absent, love conveys an atmosphere, or shines as with a saint's aureole, evident to all the initiated.

It is interesting to see the growth of love and its expressions at its many stages. It has its frothy stage, when words are its noisy revelation, and a host of protestations and gorgeous similes accompany it. It drops into poetry more or less exuberant, and its letters are very long. Later on, the wordiness drops off, and the more silent stages begin, when neither tries to say how much they love. This is the deeper mood, when much is necessarily left to be understood, and is understood well. Shallow natures wonder at this silence, and jump to the conclusion that love is absent, and indifference is the moving spirit. But it is all natural; it is the still movement of the deep waters. It is love running into depth.

And perhaps of all silent types, this love is the most definite and distinct. There is no

possibility of mistaking it for some other emotion. For silences have their tones like voices, and there is a timbre in their many voices which, to a taught ear, is clear and unmistakeable. Silence runs up its own scales, and hammers out its own chords of music. And when it deals with the emotions of love, its chords and melodies are always the most penetrating and charming.

A very distressing type of silence is that of *grief* when, in the depths of sorrow, nothing is said, absolutely nothing.

Such is the grief which comes from suddenness and shock sprung upon the mind, perhaps by telegram, or from some newspaper paragraph. For a time it seems as if the mind were stunned, and found it impossible to realize the dread fact.

Some of us know the type well, sitting in stony silence, looking into space, unable to say a word, or to weep a tear. There, in silent absorption, they remain, and nothing seems able to move them.

After a time nature reasserts itself, and the tears flow, bringing relief. But so long as the inner strain lasts, and the pang is at its greatest, silence is the only language.

Those of feeble imagination, and more expressive tendencies, fail to appreciate this type of silent grief, and consider it unnatural, and hard, and even unfeeling. So little do they understand deeper feelings, and their silent expressions.

As a rule, we find that the greater the culture,

the less the outer expression of grief. Possibly, with culture there comes a greater control of the emotions. Certainly, the grief which cries out, and makes a noise, is less lasting than the quiet and silent form. We see it at funerals, where the exhibition of grief is most explosive on the way to the Cemetery, and where on the return laughter replaces the tears. But he who goes silently comes back silently too.

It was with this silent grief that they buried Sir John Moore, the hero who had kept up a running fight from Astorga to Corunna, and who, in the victorious battle before embarkation, received his fatal wound. His sorrowing officers buried him where he fell, and Wolfe tells the tale of his silent funeral:—

> "Not a sound was heard, not a funeral note,
> As his corpse to the rampart we hurried,
> Not a soldier discharged his farewell shot
> O'er the grave where our hero was buried."

Reverence is a mood which conveys its spirit in a silent form, feeling that silence befits it better than speech.

It is this spirit of silence which falls on a great crowd, when it stands viewing the funeral procession of some great hero or beloved Sovereign. So was Wellington buried; so Queen Victoria.

The same silence of reverence sits gracefully upon us when we find ourselves in some holy spot, consecrated to great purpose, as in Cathedral or Church where men worship God, and the memory of it lingers even when the services are over. Speech with others is too

trivial to have a place ~~in the House of God~~. Silence is infinitely more becoming.

Sometimes we feel dumb in the presence of great men who have done great exploits in life, for the good of humanity, or for the extension of our mental horizons.

This was the kind of silence which fell upon a young admirer of Darwin, when he was introduced by Sir John Lubbock to that eminent philosopher. He could not summon courage to say one word to the man he so deeply reverenced. And when he came away, with silence intact, he burst into tears.

If it be true that the spirit of reverence is deserting us, we can only lament it.

CHAPTER XXI.

CHILDREN AND SILENCE.

IT is a generally accepted theory that, to compass any human improvement, we must begin early. It is in the first months and years of life that we make our greatest impression. And it is often the case that, if we fail here, we fail everywhere.

And so all the world lays the utmost stress on the earliest and most impressionable days, if mind, body, or spirit are to be dealt with to the best advantage. Animals are trained young; trees and plants are bent when young and tender; and children must be taught good ways and habits when they are most amenable to education.

And, whatever may have been the faults of our forefathers, we, at least, are acting up, in most of our efforts, to our convictions.

But it appears that few have yet seen the applicability of early training to correct the babbling ways of men. This has too often been left to chance, or to later training. Most have thought that instruction here was not easy or practicable, and that children must in this matter be left largely to themselves. In fact,

there has been surrender on the part of many, where there should have been steady effort to teach and amend.

But let us be just. Not all have so surrendered. Some parents and teachers have assiduously sought to teach the little people silence. And they have had their reward, more or less.

Unfortunately, some have not yet seen the importance of silence-teaching, and have not even seen the beauty of silence itself.

"It is not natural for a child to be quiet," some have said. "Let them talk, and sing, and shout, and scream. It does their lungs good. I hate your quiet child."

No doubt, there are times when a child should exercise his lungs, and shout with the loudest. But then, there are times when silence is more becoming. And how is the child to distinguish, unless we teach him? And how is the child to learn how to control himself, unless we shew him how? It is with the silent intervals that we are concerned now.

We might press the matter further, and ask our protesting friend whether he likes chattering adults, and likes them to run on everlastingly and monopolise the conversation. He will, perhaps, declare that the cases are not alike. But we must then point out that those who in their adult life cannot stop talking are just those who in their early years were never corrected, and never taught the advantages of silence. You cannot have it both ways; neglect the teaching of silence, and you permit a habit to grow out

of all bounds. The plant that runs riot is the plant which has never been pruned.

So, taking for granted, as I am sure we may, that silence should be taught systematically and thoroughly in the earliest years, let us try to discover some principles by the light of which we may be able to succeed in our teaching.

One thing is very certain, that silence can never be rightly taught by temper.

This is the usual medium. To swoop down upon the chattering child, like a hot thunderbolt, frightening it out of its senses by the onslaught, is neither nice nor effective. For a time it may answer, because it is so alarming, but there is no permanence in it, for it never reaches the heart of the offender. It is the silence of fear; not of principle. Nothing good ever comes from fright.

It is equally certain that silence can never be rightly conveyed in a wrapping of selfishness.

How often it happens that, so long as a child's noise only upsets others, it is tolerated, but the moment that it interferes with the reading or the sleep of oneself, it is immediately and hotly denounced.

Of course, any moderately observant child can discover the difference. It is just a selfish demand made, not for the sake of instructing in the virtues of silence, but for the sake of peace. And so it is no real lesson at all, and is understood to be only a temporary expedient to allow mother or father to sleep, or enjoy themselves over a book, or game.

Equally doubtful as a remedy is the silence

taught in the form of punishment. It is almost as bad as compelling the reading of a chapter in the Bible as a task for being naughty.

This silence compulsion can only induce one effect, and that is to make silence itself hateful. How can it have any other result, when it is associated with correction? Such a method of procedure is a slander on the majesty of silence, instead of a commendation. It is a direct lesson on the joys and beauty of babble and noise.

But for downright folly nothing, I think, beats the method of some parents and teachers in scolding a child for silence, as if it were a crime.

For there are silent children, who by nature are shy and reserved, and whose tendency is to lapse into silence before others. No doubt it makes them seem awkward and *gauche*, and may seem to reflect on their parents' treatment of them, but is it a thing to be condemned? If they are not as showy as other children, they are not so pert; and if they seem stupid, it does not follow that they are so. It is, in fact more likely that they are the more observant and thoughtful. Depend upon it, they are not losing ground by their silence, but rather gaining it, absorbing what, in shallower children, is thrown off thoughtlessly.

So, instead of shaking them, and scolding them, and pointing out the superior virtues of more chattering children, let them alone, and wait. They are only taking their bearings in this noisy world, modestly keeping in the

background, and gathering something which, later on, will make them worth hearing. Precocity is not the best of gifts, and the most wearing qualities are those which have slowly and surely matured in silence. So no forcing, please, unless you want to be the parents of a little shallow prig.

But all this is negative, showing how not to do it. Let us try to be a little more positive, and point out some necessary ingredients in the art of teaching silence to small people.

It must never be forgotten that we are seeking to teach self-control, the most difficult of all exploits for children, and the most necessary, if they are to meet life wisely later on.

If a child is hurt, however little, his first instinct is to cry and scream. Possibly, he is more frightened than hurt. It is his method not only of getting sympathy, but of being relieved by a cake or a kiss. Probably, we have noticed that bribes of any kind are pernicious in the long run. And what we had better do is to teach him the merits of courage and bravery. Every child is anxious to seem "grown up," and to have a big nature, and if we can impress upon his small mind that it is braver not to cry, we have taught him an excellent lesson in the art of silence. When he has overcome his tendency to shriek by his own small energies, he is rapidly becoming master of himself and his emotions. He will be hurt a good many times in his small and big life, but these first lessons will make a man of him, and

give him a lasting control over his vociferous tendencies.

If a child wants anything, his instinct is to cry for it, and, later on, to plead for it with screams. Much will depend on whether he gets what he wants by these noisy means or not. Some foolish parents, for the sake of peace, will surrender to his cries. Possibly, it has not occurred to them, that, by such surrenders, they are purchasing their peace in an exceedingly dear market. They are instilling into the impressionable mind of the child the idea that screams are the true highway of benefits. Is not this one reason why we are, most of us, so persistent in our babbling demands? We shall get what we want if we make enough noise, and ask long enough.

I remember once calling at a cottage in the North of England, where, upon the floor, sat a small child playing with a toy. But his face, red, and wet with tears, revealed the fact that a great storm had been in progress not long before. Moreover, there were heavings in his little bosom like the ground-swell after a storm. I enquired what was the matter, and was told that he had been in great tribulation, because his mother refused to let him have a toy, which he was clamouring for.

"But," I said, "he has got it."

"Oh! yes," replied the mother, "I let him have it for the sake of peace."

If that child becomes a clamorous man, shouting out his wants in the splitting ears of his fellows, it will be the fault of that foolish mother.

The advantage of a low voice is worth remembering in our training of children in the silent way.

Have we not all noticed that shouted commands are never so effective as those quietly spoken, and that, when we raise our voices, we somehow lose power? Blustering is never so mighty as gentleness, and the soft, low voice has an authority all its own.

In schools this difference may be easily put to the test. Go to a school where the master shouts, and tries to raise his voice above the babble of the scholars, and then go to another where the voice is pitched low and orders are given quietly. In the one disorder abounds; in the other you may hear a pin drop. Power and authority are certainly with the quiet method.

We must cultivate this gentle voice in the home, if we are to prevail. Children have no respect for rushing ways, and seem to know that loudness and weakness go hand in hand.

The nearer we get to silence in our dealing with children, the better we inculcate silence in them. Silence is not to be taught through a megaphone. We must not fit our voices to their ears, but we must make them fit their ears to our voices.

And then how many lessons are made ready to our hands on the subject of silence in the world around us; lessons which are made for our children's ears!

How silently the flowers grow, and, indeed, all nature! Grass and trees are silent in their growth. They make no fuss about growing.

And how silently God's creatures move about in life! Can you hear a cat's footfall, or the running of the mouse along the floor?

Lions and tigers make no noise when they are on business bent. Silence is their life. But for silence, what would become of their supper?

The sun, the moon, and the stars go on their way in the heavens, and do it all silently. While man's little trains move with a rush and a roar, planets roll along in perfect stillness. The snow falls silently, flake by flake, and piles up its great masses with never a sound.

With such analogies let us instil into the children's minds the majesty, the strength, and the beauty of silence, and bid them emulate nature's ways. They will quite understand it. It will impress them as nothing else can do. It will show forth to the child the beauty of silence in God's world.

Then we shall find an admirable message in the connection between silence and love. Love thinking of others, and trying to make life as pleasant as it can for others, is quite intelligible to the smallest child, if rightly put.

Noise makes the head ache; silence makes it well again. Here is a reason for silence, which is better than a hundred commands.

Noise prevents me from enjoying my book, or even from thinking at all. But when silence comes in, I can read comfortably, and think clearly.

So, if you are silent, I shall be happy. No aimless silence this, but something productive and useful.

Someone is trying to sleep, and all children know how noise prevents sleep. Will you help mother to go to sleep, just as you try to help baby to sleep, by being as silent as a mouse?

Then you can impress the becomingness of silence by taking the little one to silent places, where others are silent.

What helpful silence we get in our Churches, not the less impressive because it is broken by the songs and responses of the worshippers! A child does not mind imitating others, and has no feeling of ill-treatment when it has not to be silent alone. And Sunday by Sunday it gradually learns the silent lesson, until it no more wants to talk in Church as it did at first. It learns not a little self-control by this happy discipline.

But, naturally, the chief method of teaching the child is by example.

No matter what we teach a child, unless we follow up our teaching by practice, all goes for nought. It is but rarely that a garrulous parent has a silent child, for, being soused with speech day by day, the child fancies this exuberance to be the normal course for all rightly conducted people. Inheritance, no doubt, has something to do with the talkativeness of the child; but more is due to the parents' unhappy example.

Perhaps one of the most significant signs of the times in connection with the teaching of silence to the young, is the place it has been given in the very last educational experiment, that of Madame Montessori, of Rome. In former

days you could hear the school in the next street. Now-a-days you can hardly hear it in the next house, since this new method has been adopted.

Madame Montessori begins with children of very tender years, from three to five, and aims at educating every part of their being in an element of freedom, excluding all strain or pressure. In a sense nobody teaches; the child is just directed in a process of self-education. Grooves and channels are dug, didactic materials are placed in their way, and they learn to appropriate and digest them by a natural instinct. And they really do it.

Not the least successful of all her subjects is the teaching of silence. She has great faith in its power, and makes it her constant adjunct. It provides, in her opinion, a growing atmosphere.

But Madame Montessori's silence is no manufactured one, constructed by frowning brow, stamping foot, and a clatter of the inevitable cane on the desk. She makes it a charming diversion, a bit of pure pleasure, a thing to be delighted in for its own sake.

A silence which is noisily created is in constant need of being recreated, since it is made from without, and without the child's co-operation. Like a house of cards, it is made only to fall again quickly.

Let us see how she does it :—

"I call the children's attention to myself, telling them to see how silent I can be. I assume different positions, standing, sitting, and maintain each pose silently without movement.

We breathe so that we may be heard. But I maintain absolute silence. I call a child, and ask him to do as I am doing. He adjusts his feet to a better position, and this makes a noise. He moves an arm, stretching it out upon the arm of a chair; it is a noise. His breathing is not altogether silent; it is not tranquil, and absolutely unheard, as mine is.

The other children are watching all this with much interest, and learn what is new to them, that there are degrees of silence.

They try to imitate their teacher. I call attention here and there to a foot that moves almost inadvertently.

When the children are trying in this way, there is established a silence, very different from that which we carelessly call by that name.

It seems as if life gradually vanishes, and that the room becomes empty. Then we begin to notice the tick-tock of the clock, and the sound seems to grow in intensity, as the silence becomes absolute. The children sit fascinated by the silence, as if by some conquest of their own.

Having arrived at that point, we darken the windows, and tell the children to close their eyes, resting their heads upon their hands.

'Now listen,' we say, 'a soft voice is going to call your name.'

Then the low voice calls, as if I were calling from across the mountains. Each one as he is called, lifts his head, opens his eyes as if altogether happy, then rises, silently seeking not to move the chair, and walks on the tips of

his toes so quietly that he may not be heard. Nevertheless, his steps resound in the silence."

And the results of such training? Let Madame Montessori answer :—

"The children, after they have made the effort necessary to maintain silence, enjoyed the sensation, took pleasure in the silence itself. They have won a victory over themselves.

After such exercises, it seemed to me that the children came closer to me; certainly they became more obedient, more gentle, more sweet. We had indeed been isolated from the world, and had passed several minutes during which the communion between us was very close, I wishing for them and calling for them, and they receiving in the perfect silence the voice which was directed personally towards each of them, crowning each with happiness."

Madame Montessori describes very graphically a Game of Silence, which had for its centre a real Italian baby in its swaddling bands :—

"I went into the schoolroom where the children clustered around me, and sat down. They looked at my little one with a mixture of tenderness and joy. None of us had yet spoken a word. Finally I said to them :—

'I have brought you a little teacher.'

Surprised glances and laughter.

'A little teacher. Yes, because none of you know how to be quiet as she does.'

At this all the children changed their positions, and became quiet.

'Yes, no one holds her limbs and feet as quietly as she.'

Everyone gives closer attention to the position of limbs and feet. I looked at them smiling.

'Yes, but they can never be quiet as hers. You moved a little, but she, not at all. None of you can be as quiet as she.'

The children looked serious. The idea of the superiority of the little teacher seems to have reached them.

'None of you can be silent, voiceless, as she, because listen to her breathing, how delicate it is. Come near to her on your tip-toes.'

Great silence. Several bent over the baby.

'None of you can breathe as silently as she.'

The children almost ceased to breathe. I rose.

'Go out quietly, quietly,' I said. 'Walk on the tips of your toes. Make no noise.'

Following them, I said 'And yet I still hear some sounds but she, the baby walks with me, and makes no sound. She goes out silently.'"

No doubt this silent system will be followed largely, for who can tell how much the whole future life will be moulded by these early lessons in the art and practice of being silent?

CHAPTER XXII.

MONASTIC SILENCE.

IT is a long gallery that we are now to enter, and many faces will look down upon us as we tread it; many sad ones, many subdued ones, and undoubtedly, here and there, many serene ones.

Whatever our theological prepossessions may be, we may not deny that God has His chosen ones in unlikely places, and we must not draw rigid lines as if we knew God's secrets fully. There are Brother Lawrences, and Thomas à Kempises, and St. Theresas behind exceeding high walls. We may wonder at their seclusion, and would have advised a different place of abode had we been asked, but we cannot deny that they bore the Christian name gracefully, or that they teach us, as the fruits of their solitude, much that we are glad to learn.

The days when the monastic idea arose and flourished were other days than our own. They were rough days, when rough men harassed the Church of God with rough words and rougher deeds. They were days of robbery, and bloodshed, and lust, and torture. And so, because it was not easy to live a pure life in the world,

men and women turned aside into the cloister. What else could they do? Had we lived in those tumultuous times, such might have been our own method of escape.

The early glimpses we catch of those days of old are of harassed souls, stealing away secretly from their tormentors and tempters, and hiding where shelter could be found.

Some lived the hermit life in the desert, preferring utter solitude and spiritual safety to the circus, the theatre, and the dizzying world.

Others lived in communities, the first monasteries, where they spent their lives in prayer and mutual service, bound by some simple rules.

From the first, however, they knew their foes, and fought them by appropriate, or, as it often happened, by inappropriate, means. And amongst their foes they invariably singled out the sin of unbridled speech. Some sins have so faint a border line, that men have doubted how far they were sinful, but the sins of the tongue have always taken a leading place in the catalogue, being set amongst the first and worst. It is this fact which makes this present chapter so important a one in a book on silence. The monastic method of dealing with the unruly tongue is, in fact, the first genuine and systematic plan of checking, and, if possible, of eradicating, the evil.

One of the earliest of these recluses was St. Antony the Egyptian, born in the third century, whose life was written by no less a man than St. Athanasius. First he sought

refuge in a tomb, which, not proving satisfactory, he exchanged for a ruined castle on the Nile. But he was too popular, and the crowds who flocked to his retreat for his counsel and his prayers hampered him considerably in his religious musings.

Like all pioneers, he was considered by his friends to be somewhat too enthusiastic in his methods, and, thinking that he was hiding his light under a bushel, they sought to bring him back into the busy world. But he was not to be so drawn.

"As a fish dies out of the water," he said, "so a monk out of his cell."

At last, wearied by the invasion of curious and entangling men, he once more changed his quarters for the neighbourhood of the Red Sea. And here he died in his 105th year. The hermit life was evidently not an unhealthy one.

St. Antony set the fashion which quickly took on. He was considered a spiritual hero, and so fully did he strike the imagination of his times, that he found numerous imitators. St. Augustine, indeed, traced his conversion to, amongst other causes, the self-sacrifice of St. Antony.

That he was an exceptional man, and, amidst all his enthusiasms, kept a level head, is seen by his advice to the puzzled of his time who came for counsel.

"Trust not to thine own righteousness," said he to one such suppliant. "Regret not the thing that is passed. Bridle thy tongue and thy stomach."

"He who sits still in the desert," he said to another, "is safe from three enemies; from hearing, from speech, from sight; and has to fight only against one, his own heart."

"If you try to keep silence," he said to one of his disciples, "do not think that you are exercising a virtue, but that you are unworthy to speak."

This love of silence was no idiosyncracy of St. Antony, but the feature of the class, all of whom pressed the duty of bridling the tongue as the great essential for Christian people. Being usually one of the most abused of human members, they made its management the primary duty of all who would lead a true life.

"Give me, father," asked one troubled soul, "one thing that I may keep, and be saved thereby."

"If thou canst be injured, and insulted, and hear, and be silent, that is a great thing, and above all other commandments."

Macarius, too, when asked by a brother to tell him a rule by which he might be saved, replied:—

"Fly from men. Sit in thy cell, and lament for thy sins continually. And, what is above all other virtues, keep thy tongue in order, as well as thy appetite."

It is impossible to say that these injunctions are very complete or Scriptural; and they betray a lamentable ignorance of the Gospel of Christ; but it is well to remember that at the root of such monasticism lay the mistaken

notion that self-sacrifice, rather than the perfect Sacrifice of the Saviour, was the way of life. The whole system was built up on the self-righteous error of redeeming one's own soul by human effort.

Arsenius, who left the Court to spend his days with ignorant monks, for the superior quiet he discovered only there, quarrelled with even nature's voices.

"What was that noise?" he asked one day of his companions.

"It is only the wind among the trees," they replied.

"Alas!" he exclaimed, "I have fled everywhere in search of silence, and yet here the very reeds speak."

We hope that this story may not be true, for, to us, the voice of the winds is a voice from heaven, and carries a message to a rightly attuned ear. A silence which is irritated by such a voice is not the silence God commends.

As we know, the monastic vogue gained more and more popularity as the years advanced, until its old purpose was forgotten, and men and women became as corrupt as the system. For the need no longer existed, and the outside world became even a safer place than monastery and nunnery walls. Idleness, self-indulgence, and luxury, became the rule, and corruption reigned. It had outlived its purpose. Even if we discount the common story of failure, enough remains to brand the system as evil. A horrible ferment worked through the monastic mass until the smell of it reached to heaven.

Only too evidently a master hand was needed to deal with the thousand abuses which prevailed.

Then St. Benedict arose to grapple with the mischief.

"The East has few great men; many madmen. The West has madmen enough, but still many great men."

St. Benedict was one of these great men, born to be a leader of his fellows. In his early years he was made the head of a community by the compulsion of his fellow monks, but his rule was so stern that they repented of their choice, and tried to poison him.

Strong and devoted men have always a following, and St. Benedict found his hands full of work for the Orders. He believed that there was good in the system, if rightly directed, and he bent his energies to draw up a Code of Rules, which all might observe with advantage. It is this Rule of St. Benedict which East and West have agreed to follow more or less.

Now, I am not writing a chapter on Monasticism, but on monastic silence. Most people know how largely the element of silence enters into the system. It is more rigidly demanded in some orders than in others, but in all its place is very prominent. And the reason lies on the surface, for no element enters more into an unholy life than the too glib use of the tongue. Indeed, in one aspect, monasteries and nunneries are schools of silence. And the only way of learning silence is to be silent.

Thus, by the rule of St. Antony, the monks are compelled "to live alone, work alone, walk alone, and sleep alone."

Should one monk wish to communicate with another, and call upon him in his cell for that purpose, "no idle questions are to be asked him. And should he chatter foolishly, he is to be cautiously silenced."

"A monk must not show off his voice, but pray in a low tone," a rule which seems to prove that, being debarred from speaking, they made it up by louder singing and chanting.

The Rule of St. Pachomius insisted on the use of signs as a means of communication, ruling out all verbal exchanges. Should it be necessary to work together, as in the bakery, silence must still be the rule. And even in going to and from their work, silence was enjoined to all.

No matter how racy a bit of news a monk might hear, and burn to pass on, he must chain up his lips, and enjoy it alone. "All tattling abroad, or bringing gossip home, is strictly prohibited."

Words with passion in them came in for special reprobation.

St. Basil, in his generally accepted Rule, laid down the following:—

"Silence was to be strictly observed except in prayer and psalmody. Signs were to be used in place of words. But even these were to be forbidden, if they indicated sullenness, and discontent, or ill-will towards others. Even when it was found necessary to speak, a low and

gentle tone was to be used, and a loud voice was only to be cultivated when rebuke had to be administered. Absolute silence was to be the penance for idle chatterers."

St. Augustine formulated certain rules for the nuns who were under his control, for he found them peculiarly unruly in their behaviour, and especially in the use of their tongues. He ordered them to use the Oratory, for instance, for singing and prayer only, and not for the gathering of the sisters for gossip. He forbade them to chatter at table also, but to listen diligently to the reading.

It was at this juncture that St. Benedict came on the scene, reducing the many old and scattered Rules to order. He had no mercy on laxity of any sort, and those who chose the life of solitude and prayer he kept firmly and rigorously to their vows.

To St. Benedict also silence was a necessity, though not at all times, but only on occasions. But " spareness and wholesomeness of speech " was the regulation for all times.

If they listened to a reader at meals, as they were bound to do, they must really listen, and not interrupt even to ask questions. If some communication were necessary, let them make signs.

After meals came the necessary *siesta* in the warmer climates. Then he enjoins, " They are to rest in silence on their beds."

It is difficult in these noisy days to appreciate at its full value the quietness of one of these Communities day by day. But perhaps we

should soon tire of such unmitigated silence, and long for a little wholesome noise. This is how Sir John Stephen describes the silent lives of the French Benedictines :—

" In the whirl and uproar of the handicrafts of our own day, it is difficult to imagine the noiseless spectacle which, in those ages so often caught the eye, as it gazed on the secluded Abbey, and the adjacent Grange. In black tunics, the mementoes of death, and in leathern girdles, the emblems of chastity, might then be seen carters, silently yoking their bullocks to the team, and drawing them in silence to the fields ; or shepherds, exchanging some inevitable whispers while they watched their flocks, or vine dressers, pruning the fruit of which they might neither taste nor speak ; or wheel-wrights, carpenters and masons, plying their trade like the inmates of some deaf and dumb asylum, and all pausing from their labours as the Convent bell, sounding the hours of prime or nones or vespers, summoned them to join in spirit, even when they could not repair in person to those sacred offices."

In the Rule of St. Columba, not only were the monks to be careful of their own speech, but they were to take care that the corrupting influences from without might not set a bad fashion of speech :—

" A person who would talk with thee in idle words, or of the world, or who murmurs at what he cannot remedy or prevent, thou shalt not admit him to thee."

It would seem, however, that all these rules

and regulations proved but flimsy barriers to the inward pressure on the lips of the very human folks to be found within the walls of the secluded. Soon the dikes weakened and let a trickle through; only to be followed by the inevitable fracture of the dikes themselves. Words and works became alike unclean, until the corruption became a world-wide scandal.

When the pendulum swung back again, and the evil was firmly grasped by the strong and merciless hands of the Reformers, it was not a less but a more strict rule which came upon the scene. The tongue must be doubly and trebly bitted this time.

The Cluniacs led the way, and set the rigid fashion, to be soon followed by others. In the fervour of their new zeal these monks bore all kinds of sufferings and losses rather than break their vows of silence. One allowed his horse to be stolen, rather than cry "Stop, thief!" Two of them suffered themselves to be carried off as prisoners by the Northmen, refusing to call for help. Novices were all taught a code of signals to save the necessity of speaking.

A century later Romauld founded a still stricter order at Camaldoli, among the Apennines. He himself is said to have kept absolute silence for seven years.

The Cistercians, however, turned the screw several threads higher, in their insistence on silence.

But the Order which outdid all the rest was the Trappist, whose "deathlike silence" has become the standard of the most rigorous of

silences. The Trappist's was a vow to perpetual silence. And this not only applied to the lips but to all noisy movements. The leaves of a reader's book must be turned inaudibly. Should a spoon, or a fork, fall to the ground at meal-times, the offender must rise from his seat, and lie prostrate on the ground until permitted by the Superior to rise.

But the female Orders were treated more mildly with regard to the silent vow. They made only modified promises. We may suppose the reason for this concession was that no burden must be laid on the back heavier than could be borne. It was thought to be beyond the sisters' power to be absolutely silent for any length of time.

But the Bernardine sisters at Biarritz, according to Hamerton, were an exception, for he tells us that :—

" They live among the dreary wastes of sand that stretch along the southern coasts. They eat black bread, drink water, and never speak ; never. A Chartreuse may speak once a week ; a Bernadine is silent as the dead."

This would agree with the story told of three anchoresses, who lived under similar vows of silence.

One broke silence after the first year, by saying, " This is a beautiful year after all."

At the end of the second year, another broke silence by replying to the remark made the year before, " It is indeed."

The third anchoress held out for the whole of the three years, and only then broke down in

the interests of silence, when she said in a tone of deep reproof :—

" If you women go on chattering like this, I shall go out into the world again."

One of the most interesting and impressive monasteries in the world is that of La Grande Chartreuse, near Grenoble. Built in a most charming situation, I know none more worthy of a visit. There are no monks now in the great Monastery, for the French government has ejected them. As you are taken round by a government official it is hard to repeople the place with its white-robed brothers, even in imagination. All is silent and empty.

It was founded in 1084 by St. Bruno, at a time when the whole region was a desolate waste ; indeed, it was this very loneliness which appealed to him so forcibly. It was a silent place for silent people.

The rule was a decidedly rigorous one. Each monk inhabited his little suite of rooms in utter solitude for six days in the week, exchanging not a single word with anyone. His food was thrust through a trap-door ; silently he took it, and as silently returned the empty dishes. He must not be idle. Attached to his two living rooms was a workshop, where he busied himself with carpentry, or some other handicraft. There was a little plot of ground attached to his quarters, where he was expected to grow flowers or vegetables. So there was no excuse for lack of occupation. Moreover, he could read, or write, or pray.

On Sundays the rule of silence was relaxed,

and every brother might sally forth to meet and talk with his brethren; a very human bit of concession which must have been very welcome.

It was of St. Bruno that the *bon-mot* of Clement XI was spoken, for, standing one day before a statue of the founder, he said:—

"Ah! he would speak, had not the rules of his house imposed silence."

It was evidently a speaking likeness.

Close by stood a Carthusian Convent in which the nuns were excused such rigid silence, being allowed to meet in one common refectory, and to speak at meal times.

The Brotherhood of St. Francis was not a silent Order, but silence was much recommended to all, in the interests of the soul. This we may discover from the instructions of St. Francis:—

"Set forth and walk two and two, humble and gentle, keeping silence until Tierce, praying to God in your hearts, carefully avoiding vain and useless words. Meditate as much while on your journey as if you were shut up in a hermitage or in your cell, for wherever we are, and wherever we go, we carry our cell with us. Brother body is the cell, and the soul is the hermit who dwells in it, there to pray to the Lord and meditate."

The nuns of Port Royal, under La Mère Angélique, kept rigidly the Benedictine rule, and silence reigned supreme when it was ordered. It was said of them:—

"Opportunities of speech were rare. Silence became indeed so much of a habit, that a

nun might vow not to speak for many weeks consecutively without exciting notice."

Angélique regarded silence as a form of self-denial, desirable for the development of the spiritual life. She inscribed on the corridor walls a code of signals for the silent expression of actual deeds.

Of Agnes, her sister, it was said that :—

"Silence was more welcome to her than speech, that she might continually listen to the whisperings of the Spirit."

And the sisters caught the spirit of their Heads, for one wrote :—

"We learnt that silence must not be idle. We must needs use it for speech with God; listening to Him. Be we ever so busy, we need not lose the spirit of prayer and meditation; and the more silent we are among ourselves, the more we might look for intercourse with God."

Once Mère Angélique was summoned on business to Paris, and, fearing that difficulties might arise from the wagging of tongues during her absence, she placed all the novices under a vow of silence until her return. She thought that there would be greater safety in silence than in speech. And no doubt she was right.

Such are some of the monastic silences, only specimens of many more which we have neither time nor space to descant upon. But they will serve the purpose intended, and will give us a vivid glimpse of a systematic effort to keep the tongue in order.

It is impossible to pronounce the method an

unqualified success. Organs are not so easily suppressed, and the tongue least of all. Nature is so elastic that, rigidly held back, it is sure to rebound, and with greater vigour. Besides, the outside plan of suppression is to work on the wrong side, making silence a mere mechanical device far removed from any suspicion of real victory. This method of tying up the tongue into a knot is akin to that old device of cutting it out.

When we survey the effort to close the lips, and silence the tongue on all occasions, we are tempted to ask whether we have any right to throw out of gear an organ given for use. Granted that the abuse of the tongue is so immense, may not its energies be turned into a good channel, and be made an implement for God and His glory? To silence it altogether is not a Divine plan, but an entirely mundane one, and this monastic rule is an attempt to be wiser than the tongue's Maker.

Moreover, there seems to be not a little cowardice in the method. It is shirking a battle, instead of fighting it. The tongue is only one disorderly member, and we can scarcely refuse it action, unless we are prepared to go to greater lengths still, and tie up the arm, lest we should strike with it, or seal up the ears, lest something defiling should find an entrance.

It shews, too, an absolute distrust of human nature in presumably holy people. To deprive them of freedom, lest they should misuse it, is like the system which trains boys on the same

vigilant plan, setting watch and guard to make impossible any breach of law. This monastic plan is a sort of seminary plan, which compels men and women to do right by cutting off all possibility of doing wrong. If temptation is the field of possible victory, and the only field, what good can there be in saving them from the fight? Human nature is not braced but enervated by such hot-house coddling.

CHAPTER XXIII.

SHAKESPEARE AND SILENCE.

THE world has agreed to put Shakespeare on a pedestal alone, and, although many generations have passed since his day, it has seen no reason for displacing him. Great men have come and gone, but few have reached even to Shakespeare's feet. He is still easily first.

For the Shakespeare note, like the "Nelson touch," is unmistakeable. His sweep is like the eagle's, as easy and majestic as it is lofty. He can stoop low, when he has low characters to pourtray. But he is more at home when he mounts, and then he is irresistible, bearing us along in happy subjection to his spirit.

It seems only meet therefore that we should search his many pages for illustrations of our present theme. It was unlikely, to say the least, that we should ever seek in vain, and, certainly, the mine is richness itself, and the difficulty is to select representative utterances from among the many allusions to it.

It is all in our favour that Shakespeare's genius was bent towards the dramatic, for it is in the concrete and everyday world to which he introduces us that we are sure to find the

garrulous or silent characters that we are anxious to meet. They stand before our eyes with human frailties and human excellences lying thick upon them, and we are able at our leisure to find the characters we want.

There is no system or method in his allusions. The characters come and go, and out of their clash we catch the sparks which betray the men and the women. Just as the Bible gives us no specific theology, so Shakespeare's words do not provide us with any philosophical scheme. We have to find it for ourselves, and read him line by line to piece together his full-orbed thought. It is only when we find our harvest spread out before us that we appreciate aright the profundity and reach of his mind.

Neither must we be misled by the fact that it is the characters who emit the scintillations, for we are obliged in ascribing our praise to get behind them. But who wrought out the characters? we ask. Whose brain conceived the puppets, and endowed them with life? And so we come to the great Englishman we call Shakespeare, whose bones still lie undisturbed in the Parish Church of Stratford-on-Avon, and whose bust looks silently down from the wall of the rich old chancel.

Perhaps the first impression left on the mind of the student of Shakespeare is his sly and satirical rebuke to mere talkers; those who break silence unblushingly. For these he has but scant mercy. He deems them fair game for his lash, and whips them, so to speak, in the public eye. The Spartans made their helots

drunk to disgust their youth with the vice of inebriety. Shakespeare depicts the windmill tongue to hush the world to silence. Quite exhaustive is his gallery of tongues, set forth in all their pernicious variety, and set down in gradation of faultiness.

At the bottom is the *idle tongue* which wags just for something to do; and of this the Queen accuses her son Hamlet:—

"Come, come, you answer with an idle tongue."
(Hamlet. Act III. Scene IV.)

"He talks at random,"

was Queen Margaret's retort to Suffolk.

(The First Part of King Henry VI. Act V. Scene III.)

The *weak tongue* which emerges from "the world's wide mouth," because the fences are gone which might have kept it in, we may fairly set amongst the unfortunate rather than the guilty:—

"A thing slipp'd idly from me,
Our posy is as a gum, which oozes
From whence 'tis nourish'd."
(Timon of Athens. Act I. Scene I.)

Dogberry, knowing his men, strictly enjoins the watch to rigidly bridle their tongues:—

"You shall also make no noise in the streets; for the watch to babble and to talk is . . . not to be endured."

To which they reply,

"We will rather sleep than talk,"

which Dogberry thought more pardonable.

(Much Ado About Nothing. Act III. Scene III.)

The *candied tongue* enters the sphere of the distinctly unworthy:—

"Why should the poor be flattered?"

asks Hamlet of his friend Horatio, and answers his own question :—

"No, let the candied tongue lick absurd pomp,
And crook the pregnant hinges of the knee
Where thrift may follow fawning."
(Hamlet. Act III. Scene II.)

For the *empty tongue* to speak at all is an insult, and Shakespeare's lightnings play fast and furious on such vacuities :—

"Peace, peace, Mercutio, peace !
Thou talk'st of nothing."

To which Mercutio replies in full assent :—

"True, I talk of dreams ;
Which are the children of an idle brain,
Begot of nothing but vain fantasy."
(Romeo and Juliet. Act I. Scene IV.)

Lafeu, the old French lord, is Shakespeare's mouthpiece for the same truth :—

"One that lies three-thirds, and uses a known truth to pass a thousand nothings with, should be once heard, and thrice beaten."
(All's Well that Ends Well. Act II. Scene V.)

Moth and Costard, in "Love's Labour's Lost," take off the garrulous Sir Nathaniel and Holofernes in a trenchant aside :—

Says Moth,

"They have been at a great feast of languages and stolen the scraps."

To which Costard replies :—

"O, they have lived long on the alms-basket of words."
(Act V. Scene I.)

Similarly, Bassanio describes Gratiano in the "Merchant of Venice."

"Gratiano speaks an infinite deal of nothing. His reasons are as two grains of wheat hid in two bushels

of chaff: you shall seek all day ere you find them: and when you have them, they are not worth the search." (Act I. Scene I).

King Henry V prided himself when speaking to his fair Katharine of France on being

"A fellow of plain and uncoined constancy,"

and derided

"These fellows of infinite tongue, that can rhyme themselves into ladies' favours,"

and

"Do always reason themselves out again,"

and declares that "a speaker is but a prater." (Henry V. Act V. Scene II.)

"Fie! What a spendthrift is he of his tongue!"

said the usurping Antonio of Milan to the good old Gonzalo.

"He will be talking,"

murmured Sebastian in assent.

Our readers will recall the wrangle in which King Henry VI, Queen Margaret, Clifford, and Richard bandied violent words to and fro:—

"Have done with words, my lords, and hear me speak,"

urges the King. To whom his fierce Queen answers:—

"Defy them then, or else hold close thy lips."

And Henry rejoins:—

"I prithee, give no limits to my tongue. I am a King, and privileged to speak."

Then Clifford strikes in:—

"My liege, the wound that bred this meeting here cannot be cured by words; therefore be still."

Richard, not to be outdone, cries fiercely:—

"By Him that made us all, I am resolved
That Clifford's manhood lies upon his tongue.'

Then "the long-tongued Warwick" follows on.

(Third Part of Henry VI. Act II. Scene II.)

From idle tongues to *calumnious* ones is not a great leap, and Shakespeare, as he held his mirror up to nature, was not likely to let them escape him.

Hamlet's words to Ophelia have a universal application:—

"If thou dost marry, I'll give thee this plague for thy dowry; be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as snow, thou shalt not escape calumny."

(Hamlet. Act III. Scene I.)

This is the

"tongue in venom steeped."

(Hamlet. Act II. Scene II.)

This is Pistol's

"killing tongue."

(Henry V. Act III. Scene II.)

Shakespeare's similitudes are always weighed and apt, and his imagery of over-speech is ever picturesque and vigorous:—

"A plague upon this howling. They are louder than the weather or our office,"

cries the Boatswain to the panic-stricken Court.

(Tempest. Act I. Scene II.)

A little later, Alonso, King of Naples, after a long interchange of wit between the members of his court, exclaims:—

"You cram these words into mine ears against
The stomach of my sense."

(Act II. Scene I.)

Indigestible stuff, evidently, and unhealthy.

Over-speech is a fly-blown thing not infrequently :—

"Buzzers to infect his ear."

(Hamlet. Act IV. Scene V.)

It is like the crack of a whip done in sport or threateningly :—

"What cracker is this same that deafs our ears
With this abundance of superfluous breaths ?"

(King John. Act II. Scene I.)

It is like a volcano, a cannonade, and a bastinado :—

"Here's a large mouth, indeed,
That spits forth death and mountains, rocks and seas.

* * *

He speaks plain cannon fire, and smoke and bounce ;
He gives the bastinado with his tongue :
Our ears are cudgell'd.

* * *

Zounds ! I was never so bethump'd with words
Since first I call'd my brother's father dad."

(King John. Act II. Scene I.)

And when such garrulity is deliberate and cold-blooded, it is infinitely worse. We can understand Othello's furious words when blinded by passion, and Desdemona's protest :—

"I understand a fury in your words,
But not the words."

But calculated verbosity is different ; such, for instance, as Lorenzo's comment on Launcelot :—

"The fool hath planted in his memory
An army of good words ; and I do know
A many fools, that stand in better place,
Garnish'd like him, that for a tricksy word
Defy the matter."

(Merchant of Venice. Act III. Scene V.)

Of the same strain is the King's comment on the "refined traveller of Spain" in "Love's Labour's Lost":—

> "That hath a mint of phrases in his brain;
> One whom the music of his own vain tongue
> Doth ravish like enchanting harmony."
>
> (Act I. Scene I)

The long-winded babbler is admirably taken off by Benedick's comment on Beatrice in "Much Ado About Nothing":—

> "I would my horse had the speed of your tongue, and so good a continuer."
>
> (Act I. Scene I.)

Mercutio was similarly described by Romeo to the Nurse in "Romeo and Juliet":—

> "A gentleman, Nurse, that loves to hear himself talk, and will speak more in a minute than he will stand to in a month."
>
> (Act II. Scene IV.)

But it is now time to move on to the more positive aspect of our subject, and see what Shakespeare has to say in *praise of silence.*

It is for one thing the attitude of the true listener:—

> "Romans, countrymen, and lovers!"

cried Brutus after Cæsar's murder,

> "Hear me for my cause, and be silent, that you may hear."
>
> (Julius Cæsar. Act III. Scene II.)

And the counsel of Polonius to his son Laertes was:—

> "Give every man thy ear, but few thy voice."
>
> (Hamlet. Act I. Scene III.)

It is good, too, to realize that the tongue has other uses than speed, and that it is an excellent instrument to be silent with.

In the tragedy of "Othello," the clown harangues the Band to this same effect:—

"Here's money for you: and the general so likes your music, that he desires you, for love's sake, to make no more noise with it. . . .

If you have any music that may not be heard, to't again."

(Othello. Act III. Scene I.)

It is useless, too, to speak to rebellious ears, for this is to "cast pearls before swine."

In that historical interview in the house of Lepidus, Antony asked:—

"Will Cæsar speak?"

To which Cæsar's reply was:—

"Not till he hears how Antony is touch'd
With what is spoken already."

(Antony and Cleopatra. Act II. Scene II.)

King Henry V declares that, while noise and war are inseparable,

"In peace there's nothing so becomes a man
As modest stillness and humility."

(Henry V. Act III. Scene I.)

Silence is the best casket in which to keep another's secrets.

It was said by one lord to another:—

"I will tell you a thing, but you shall let it dwell darkly with you."

Who replied:—

"When you have spoken it, 'tis dead, and I am the grave of it."

(All's Well that Ends Well. Act IV. Scene III.)

Jaques, in "As You Like It," declares:—

"Why 'tis good to be sad and say nothing."

(Act IV. Scene I.)

A method far better than the common one.

Count Claudio, the young Florentine, when the last barrier fell which kept his beloved Hero apart, on being bidden to speak, replied :—

"Silence is the perfectest herald of joy : I were but little happy if I could say how much."

(Much Ado about Nothing. Act II. Scene I.)

The deepest emotions are inexpressible.

There was a pathetic touch in the "Winter's Tale," when Paulina, anxious to bring the alienated King Leontes to be reconciled with his wife, suggests that the production of the new babe might soften his fierce and foolish resentment :—

"We do not know
How he may soften at the sight o' the child :
The silence often of pure innocence
Persuades when speaking fails."

(Act II. Scene II.)

It would be difficult to give higher praise to the power of silence.

Later on, when the King's folly was revealed beyond all doubt, his silence and that of his faithful Camillo is described in vivid words :—

"There was speech in their dumbness, language in their very gesture."

The changes in them were

"Very notes of admiration."

(Act V. Scene II.)

But this last quotation rather brings us into the region of *the symbolic*, in which Shakespeare with his poet mind was sure to revel.

He makes Œneas say :—

"Peace, Trojan ; lay thy finger on thy lips ! "

(Troilus and Cressida. Act I. Scene III.)

Says the Painter :—

" A thousand moral paintings I can show,
That shall demonstrate these quick blows of Fortune's,
More pregnantly than words."

(Timon of Athens. Act I. Scene I.)

Marc Antony, in his moving appeal to the citizens of Rome over the body of the murdered Cæsar, seeks

" To put a tongue in every wound of Cæsar, that should move the stones of Rome to rise and mutiny."

* * * *

" For I have neither wit, nor words, nor worth,
Action nor utterance, nor the power of speech
To stir men's blood : I only speak right on ;
I tell you that which you yourselves do know ;
Show you sweet Cæsar's wounds, poor poor dumb mouths,
And bid them speak for me."

(Julius Cæsar. Act III. Scene II.)

Macbeth, trembling on the edge of his great crime against Duncan, shudders at the horrors of the act, Duncan being so worthy.

" His virtues
Will plead like angels trumpet-tongued against
The deep damnation of his taking off."

(Macbeth. Act I. Scene VII.)

Lewis of France, going forth against King John in bloody battle, waves aside those who would bar his way, saying :—

" Strike up the drums ; and let the tongue of war
Plead for our interest and our being here."

(King John. Act V. Scene II.)

When John of Gaunt passed away, Northumberland brings the news to King Richard II :–

"My liege, old Gaunt commends him to your Majesty."

"What say she?" asks the King, to which Northumberland replies:—

"Nay, nothing; all is said:
His tongue is now a stringless instrument;
Words, life and all, old Lancaster has spent."

(Richard II. Act II. Scene I.)

Shakespeare's story of those historic symbols of York and Lancaster, the white and the red rose, and how their use arose, is well worth telling in connection with symbolic silences. Plantagenet thus starts the symbol:—

"Since you are tongue-tied and so loath to speak,
In dumb significants proclaim your thoughts."

He bids those who were of his party pluck a white rose.

Somerset bids those of the other side:—

"Pluck a red rose from off this thorn with me."

(First Part of Henry VI. Act II. Scene IV.)

And so the campaign was opened, the parties fixed, and death's maw well filled.

Bassanio, in "The Merchant of Venice," speaking of Portia's charms, not the less expressive for being silent, said:—

"Sometimes from her eyes
I did receive fair speechless messages."

(Merchant of Venice. Act I. Scene I.)

The banished Duke in the Forest of Arden, rejoicing in the liberty of the woods, tells to his lords his ample resources:—

"Sweet are the uses of adversity;
* * *
And this our life exempt from public haunt
Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
Sermons in stones and good in everything.
I would not change it."

(As You Like It. Act II. Scene I.)

Olivia, in "Twelfth Night," offers her symbol of love to Viola whom she deems to be, but mistakenly, a young man :—

"Here wear this jewel for me, 'tis my picture ;
Refuse it not ; it hath no tongue to vex you."
(Twelfth Night. Act III. Scene IV.)

The poet, in "Timon of Athens," thus apostrophises a portrait in which he considers the symbol to express with rare fidelity the original :—

"Admirable : how this grace
Speaks his own standing ! What a mental power
This eye shoots forth ! how big imagination
Moves in this lip ! to the dumbness of the gesture
One might interpret."
(Act I. Scene I.)

Nearly all *types of silence* are represented in Shakespeare.

We have the silence of pride and superiority in Ajax, when Ulysses sounds his praises. Achilles is sulking in his tent, and Ajax must not demean himself by seeking to fetch him out. And of Ajax, Diomedes, in an aside, remarks :—

"How his silence drinks up this applause ! "
(Troilus and Cressida. Act II. Scene III.)

In this same Ajax, later on, we see this silent vein covering the same sense of wondrous superiority :—

"He raves in saying nothing."

* * *

"He'll answer nobody ; he professes not answering : speaking is for beggars ; he wears his tongue in's arms."
(Troilus and Cressida. Act III. Scene III.)

The honest type of silence is well represented

by Paris to Diomedes when the latter describes fair Helen of Troy somewhat depreciatingly:—

> "Fair Diomed, you do as chapmen do,
> Dispraise the thing that you desire to buy:
> But we in silence hold this virtue well,
> We'll not commend what we intend to sell."
> (Troilus and Cressida. Act IV. Scene I.)

The sorrow that lies too deep for common expression can only be shewn silently. Capulet, bemoaning his dead daughter, Juliet, takes refuge in silence:—

> "Death that hath ta'en her hence to make me wail,
> Ties up my tongue and will not let me speak."
> (Romeo and Juliet. Act IV. Scene V.)

King Richard II expresses his sorrows in the same silent way:—

> "My grief lies all within;
> And these external manners of laments
> Are merely shadows to the unseen grief
> That swells with silence in the tortured soul;
> There lies the substance."
> (Richard II. Act IV. Scene I.)

The Duchess of York, so sorely and repeatedly stricken by murderous hands, exclaims in "King Richard III":—

> "So many miseries have crazed my voice,
> That my woe-wearied tongue is mute and dumb."
> (Richard III. Act IV. Scene IV.)

Shakespeare's *gallery of women* is famous. They pass in array before us in all forms of perfection and imperfection, each one with her own proper stamp which marks her out from all the rest. Amongst them, of course, are the garrulous, and most significant of all. "Helen's golden tongue" found few imitators. Yet there were some.

Coriolanus could hail his mother Volumnia as :—

"My gracious silence, hail!" (Coriolanus. Act II. Scene I.)

The same Volumnia, pleading with her son for Rome when threatened by his indignant arms, and apparently pleading in vain, winds up thus despairingly :—

" I am hushed until our city be a-fire,
And then I'll speak a little."
(Coriolanus. Act V. Scene III.)

Cordelia, the daughter of King Lear, who beside her voluble and false sisters seemed to be a bit of silent ice, and yet who really loved her father best, was the very model of a silent woman. " Love and be silent " was her motto, and she adhered to it despite the sharp punishment which her silence entailed :—

" I am sure my love's
More ponderous than my tongue."
(King Lear. Act I. Scene I.)

The onlookers could see it; only Lear was blind; neither would he listen when his faithful Kent spoke out :—

" Thy youngest daughter does not love thee least;
Nor are those empty-hearted whose low sound
Reverbs no hollowness." (King Lear. Act I. Scene I.)

In the fooling of Launce and Speed in " The Two Gentlemen of Verona," Launce writes down of his beloved :—

" The cate-log of her condition,"

one of which was

" She is slow in words."

Speed reads it out and turns it maliciously into a vice, to which Launce rejoins :—

"O villain, that set this down among her vices! To be slow in words is a woman's only virtue. I pray thee, out with 't, and place it for her chief virtue."
(Two Gentlemen of Verona. Act III. Scene I.)

Viola, the disguised page of the Duke of Illyria, in "Twelfth Night," discusses her real self in the Duke's ear, with whom she is in love :—

"My father had a daughter loved a man."

"And what's her history?"—

asked the Duke.

"A blank, my lord—She never told her love,
But let concealment, like a worm i' the bud,
Feed on her damask cheek: she pined in thought;
And with a green and yellow melancholy
She sat like patience on a monument,
Smiling at grief." (Twelfth Night. Act II. Scene IV.)

We have another noteworthy silent woman in Hermione, the presumed murdered wife of Leontes, the King of Sicilia, who is unveiled before his eyes as a statue. It was Paulina's trick to mend the awful breach. The King looks, and says :—

"I like your silence, it the more shows off
Your wonder: but yet speak."

The illusion is complete until, the music striking up, Hermione comes down from her pedestal and embraces him as his restored wife.
(Winter's Tale. Act V. Scene III.)

Iago is witness to the features of an excellent woman, and however ill-intended by that bloody monster, he yet voices the popular opinion :—

"She that was ever fair and never proud,
Had tongue at will and yet was never loud,
* * *
She that could think and ne'er disclose her mind."
(Othello. Act II. Scene I.)

But there is another side, and, however reluctantly, we must dwell a little on that.

There is "the shrill-tongued Fulvia," if we may quote from the jealous Cleopatra, her bitter accuser.

(Antony and Cleopatra. Act I. Scene I.)

There is Mrs. Page, whom Mrs. Ford thus describes:—

"She's a very tattling woman."

(Merry Wives of Windsor. Act III. Scene III.)

There is Margaret, Henry VI's Queen, whose fierce tongue was ever in evidence, and whom Gloucester would fain have silenced in death. He asks:—

"Why should she live to fill the world with words?"

(Third Part of Henry VI. Act V. Scene V.)

The inner pressure on some women's lips is well depicted in the Queen of Richard II, who, overhearing the black tidings of her husband's deposition and imprisonment told by the garrulous gardener, cries:—

"O, I am pressed to death through want of speaking!"

(Richard II. Act III. Scene IV.)

Shakespeare depicts the wife of Hotspur as one to whom it would be unwise to tell a secret.

Her husband parries her attempts to gain information with great gentleness, but tells her nothing of the coming outbreak against the King:—

"Constant you are,
But yet a woman: and for secrecy,
No lady closer; for I well believe
Thou wilt not utter what thou dost not know;
And so far will I trust thee, gentle Kate."

(First Part of Henry IV. Act II. Scene IV.)

Hotspur himself needed to be taken to task by Northumberland for his own headlong speech. "This woman's mood," he called it :—

> "Why, what a wasp-stung and impatient fool
> Art thou to break into this woman's mood,
> Tying thine ear to no tongue but thine own!"
> (First Part of King Henry IV. Act I. Scene III.)

In "The Taming of the Shrew," Katharina is the very symbol of the talking woman :—

> "Renown'd in Padua for her scolding tongue."
> (Act I. Scene II.)

In a few graphic words Shakespeare sums up the urgency which impels such a woman to speak :—

> "Why, Sir, I trust I may have leave to speak ;
> And speak I will ; I am no child, no babe :
> Your betters have endured me say my mind,
> And if you cannot, best you stop your ears.
> My tongue will tell the anger of my heart,
> Or else my heart concealing it will break ;
> And rather than it shall, I will be free
> Even to the uttermost, as I please, in words."
> (Act IV. Scene III.)

Flung out like bomb-shells, there is little thought of the mischief of such free speech. Prince Edward however saw it, and told Queen Margaret so :—

> "No, wrangling woman, we'll no longer stay :
> These words will cost ten thousand lives to-day."
> (Third Part of Henry VI. Act II. Scene III.)

The unloveliness of a woman so afflicted is apparent to everybody. The drunken Stephano sang of it in "The Tempest" :—

> "But none of us cared for Kate ;
> For she had a tongue with a tang."
> (Act II. Scene II.)

That it should drive a man mad is quite conceivable, and Æmilia, the Lady Abbess in "The Comedy of Errors" (Act V. Scene I.), well puts it, albeit the madness was but a part of the comedy running through the strange interchanges of the story :—

"The venom clamours of a jealous woman
Poisons more deadly than a mad dog's tooth.
It seems his sleeps were hinder'd by thy railing :
And thereof, comes it that his head is light.
Thou sayst his meat was sauced with thy upbraidings :

* * *

Thou say'st his sports were hinder'd by thy brawls :

* * *

The consequence is, then, that thy jealous fits
Have scared thy husband from the use of wits."

Leonato's reminder to his niece Beatrice, in "Much Ado About Nothing," contains a self-evident truth :—

"By my troth, niece, thou wilt never get thee a husband, if thou be so shrewd of thy tongue."

Neither is it enough to fall back on one's birth inheritance as an excuse, as Beatrice did :—

"But, I beseech your grace, pardon me ; I was born to speak all mirth and no matter."

But what was mirth to the talker was misery to the hearer, if what Benedick said was true of Beatrice :—

"She speaks poniards, and every word stabs."

* * *

"I cannot endure my Lady Tongue."

(Act II. Scene I.)

The *tragical side of silence* is not left unexpressed by Shakespeare. Indeed, it is the pivot of much of his tragedy.

Coriolanus is a notable instance of the penalties of silence. A man of deeds, and not of words, scorning words like poison, and taking refuge in his integrity, he throws away his reputation. He scouts the customary and the conventional, and finds his reward in banishment.

Cominius, his friend, expostulates with him and says :—

"You shall not be
The grave of your deserving : Rome must know
The value of her own : 'twere a concealment
Worse than a theft, no less than a traducement,
To hide your doings : and to silence that,
Which, to the spire and top of praises vouch'd,
Would seem but modest."

(Coriolanus. Act I. Scene IX.)

But no :—

"I had rather have my wounds to heal again,
Than hear say how I got them."

It was abomination to him :—

"To hear my nothings monster'd."

(Act II. Scene II.)

* * *

And so he says determinedly :—

"I cannot bring
My tongue to such a pace.

* * *

"Rather than fool it so,
Let the high office and the honour go
To one who would do thus."

(Act II. Scene III.)

* * *

"I would not buy
Their mercy at the price of one fair word."

(Act III. Scene III.)

And so the silent man passed into banishment

from the Rome he had saved by his courage and wounds, the man, of whom his mother Volumnia declared to Sicinius, one of the two hostile Tribunes, that he had :—

> " Struck more blows for Rome
> Than thou hast spoken words."
>
> (Act IV. Scene II.)

Perhaps he was too silent; probably he was; for, admirable as silence is, it can be overdone. There is such a thing as *sinful silence.*

A servant can be too silent when he sees his master wronged, as the Knight in " King Lear " declares :—

> " My duty cannot be silent when I think your highness wronged."
>
> (Act I. Scene IV.)

To refrain from praising noble deeds is another sinful silence. Hermione expresses it well :—

> " One good deed dying tongueless
> Slaughters a thousand waiting upon that.
> Our praises are our wages."
>
> (Winter's Tale. Act I. Scene II.)

Helena, in " All's Well that Ends Well," under the protection of the Countess Rousillon, and an almost adopted daughter, trying to conceal her love for the Countess' son, is thus rebuked by his mother :—

> " Only sin
> And hellish obstinacy tie thy tongue."
>
> (Act I. Scene III.)

And then she confesses it.

Cleopatra would stigmatize as sinful the bringing of bad news, and accredit merit to all silence concerning it, which is, after all, a bit

of pure cowardice. However, let us hear her set forth her case :—

" Though it be honest, it is never good
To bring bad news ; give to a gracious message
An host of tongues, but let ill tidings tell
Themselves when they be felt."

(Antony and Cleopatra. Act II. Scene V.)

King John, who silently had let it be understood that Hubert would do well to burn out young Arthur's eyes, repented afterwards when the world cried shame upon him. Then Hubert's silence became a guilty thing, since it raised no barrier before the dastardly deed, and thus he speaks his mind :—

" Hadst thou but shook thy head or made a pause
When I spake darkly what I purposed,
Or turn'd an eye of doubt upon my face,
As bid me tell my tale in express words,
Deep shame had struck me dumb, made me break off."

(King John. Act IV. Scene II.)

It turned out, however, that Hubert had not done the deed.

The sorrow that is suppressed and silent is doubly fatal, for, like all suppressed ills, the effects are driven inwards to the detriment of health and life. When Macduff in " Macbeth " learned the great tragedy of his home, his dear ones the victims of the bloody King, he received it apparently in stony silence and Malcolm urgently cried :—

" Merciful heavens !
What man ! ne'er pull your hat upon your brows ;
Give sorrow words : the grief that does not speak
Whispers the o'erfraught heart, and bids it break."

(Act IV. Scene III.)

Shakespeare has his *silent refuges*, too, for those who, oppressed by the world's discordant sounds, would fain escape them. When Melun, the French lord, was wounded in the shock of battle near St. Edmundsbury, his one thought was :—

> " I pray you, bear me hence
> From forth the noise and rumour of the field,
> Where I may think the remnant of my thoughts
> In peace, and part this body and my soul
> With contemplation and devout desires."
>
> (King John. Act V. Scene IV.)

Hotspur, in his sharp exchange of words with fiery Glendower, suggests a way of escape :—

> " Let me not understand you, then ; speak it in Welsh."
>
> (Henry IV, Part I. Act III. Scene I.)

And certainly there is a rest and refuge in this change of tongue. What you fail to understand fails to be felt.

Philosophy has its charm as a refuge for those who are able to apply it. Cardinal Wolsey suggested this way of escape for himself :—

> " If I am
> Traduced by ignorant tongues, which neither know
> My faculties nor person, yet will be
> The chronicles of my doing, let me say
> 'Tis but the fate of place, and the rough brake
> That virtue must go through."
>
> (Henry VIII. Act I. Scene II.)

It is always open to us to find relief by cutting off occasions. We may quote Wolsey again for this as he parts from his sad Cromwell :—

> " Still in thy right hand carry gentle peace
> To silence envious tongues."
>
> (Henry VIII. Act III. Scene II.)

The *silence of nature* has at least one graphic illustration :—

> " We often see, against some storm,
> A silence in the heavens, the rack stand still,
> The bold winds speechless and the orb below
> As hush as death, anon the dreadful thunder
> Doth rend the region."
>
> (Hamlet. Act II. Scene II.)

* * *

We owe many a debt to Shakespeare. He has brightened the whole world of thought. He has helped to quicken the world's imagination. He has added a distinct interest to life, and he has given us many a striking character. For all this we are profoundly grateful. And if his lash has fallen upon our frailties, we are still thankful. But, while his speech has cheered us, we are not the less mindful of what he has taught us concerning the charms, the excellences, and the defects of silence.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE SILENCE OF WAR.

SILENCE is not our first idea of war. Noise and tumult are the natural associations of all conflict. Shoutings, artillery explosions, the rattle of musketry, and the clash of steel, rise to our mind's ear when we think of battle. But with a little closer thought we pass from war's noises to war's silences, and we perceive that in the art and science of war silence plays a leading and not a subordinate part. Wars are won as much by silence as by noise.

The subject is worth a chapter, I think, if only to show how, in the very sphere of clatter, silence reveals its place and worth.

Written as it is at the time of the world's most stupendous war, and with illustrations abounding on all hands, it should not be untimely.

* * *

Long before war is declared there is a warfare being pursued in the brains and workshops of the world. This is the silent preparation for war, and it plays a larger part than we should naturally suppose.

Unsuspicious, peaceable nations, while not neglecting such preparations, press them with little urgency, but those with larger designs than mere self-protection, and with more than a little dash of subtle unscrupulosity, make them with long-continued and feverish energy. With their aggressive designs on more peaceable neighbours such preparation is made the first article of their national programme.

But they do not advertise their designs nor their arrangements to achieve them. As silently and unobtrusively as possible they build their war-ships, forge their great guns, accumulate their rifles, shells, and equipment for The Day. Their ambition is that, when the great leap comes, they may alight on an unprepared victim, like the cat upon the unsuspecting mouse.

Neither is the preparation of armaments all. Silently do they educate and discipline the nation for the great enterprise. No such greatness or culture as theirs in the whole wide world—none. Therefore none so worthy to become the masters of mankind. War, too, is blessed, hammering a nation into hardness and excellence. Cruelty is the best of kindness, too, if culture goes along with it as its fruit. Away then with the old Christian fallacies, that right is might, and that we must love our neighbour as ourselves. The world is for the Superman, not the mere man, and so the texture of a whole nation is changed, and the moral attitude twisted, until they turn their backs on their past. Surely, such a silent

transformation has never been seen in the world before, and, surely, never has nation borne such hideous fruit.

And then, as a part of their silent mission, their silent emissaries go forth to plot and scheme and spy over the wide world. Bribes silently pass from hand to hand. Disaffection is promoted, and silently blown upon to stir it into pollution. A monarch will even go forth with smiles and honeyed words, surrounded by his spies, to silently prospect and note and prepare, plotting against the very land which could not conceive of such duplicity in a guest.

And so, when The Day comes, and the eggs have emitted their noisome brood, all is ready for the shoutings of this so silent and subtle victor—perhaps.

Of course, given a capable nation, concentrating its whole thought on war, and pouring out money like water, its silent preparation will be quite thorough. All its plans will be docketted and pigeon-holed. Every man will know his place. Movement will be instantaneous when the signal is given. Emplacements for their great guns will be ready in the midst of some innocent factory. Maps will be complete to the last new house. In fact, the whole preparation will be a very miracle of silent perfection.

It may be, however, that before the battle is joined, the victims may see just a little of what is being prepared for their consumption, and, if not quite prepared, they are neither quite unprepared. It is quite possible that, though too honest and fair-minded to make

ready to strike a blow below the belt, they have a sharp weapon or two on the grindstone fit for use. It may even be that they have a few ships on the seas, and a few also on the stocks, and that some of them have their steam up, and are silently waiting.

* * *

Then war is declared. It has been precipitated from the air where it has so long been gathering. The first shot of anger has been fired. How does silence behave in this new sphere ?

First of all falls a great silence on the press. The Censor, that great and mysterious silencer, appears on the scene. The liberty of the press is to be curtailed, and the newspapers must no longer print what they deem fit, but what is befitting in war-time. The enemy is not to be treated to gratuitous information any longer. So all possible leakages are stopped, and the press, being patriotic, acquiesces readily.

The correspondent, too, finds no niche for his picturesque personality to ensconce himself. Following in the wake of the astute Japanese military authorities, a bandage is adroitly placed over his eyes. What he cannot see he cannot tell abroad. It is better to spoil a profession than to endanger a country, and not all correspondents are discreet.

And then come the quick and silent movement of men in khaki, gathering at the stations, whisked through the night to unknown destinations, and ferried across in transports to "somewhere in France." But nobody knows

anything, so silent do the men in the secret keep their lips. It is a veritable triumph of silence.

And, meantime, the Fleet has stolen quietly away to seek the foe, if he can be found. Our ships are more than ready from the first, the most ready of all. And everybody feels that in their silent strength lies their country's bulwark.

But the foe made no noise either in their approach. They were silently dropping their mines over their ships' sides, and strewing the seas with engines of death. They were marching silently to the frontiers East and West. Silently they broke their pledged word, and crossed into territories which they had solemnly promised to protect, and then we knew that it was with silent reserve that they had signed the treaty, intending to break it when it served their purpose.

It is not easy in these open days to steal a march upon one's foes, unless by such unthinkable treachery as was theirs. But little Belgium gauged aright the silent purposes of her big encroacher, for soon the silent fortresses broke into fire and flame and compelled a halt for a brief period. Resistance could not be ultimately effectual, but it served its purpose, and Belgium's fame will never die so long as the world lasts.

In earlier days, against a more primitive people, the element of surprise was more feasible. Such, for instance, was that night-march of our British army against Arabi's entrenched camp at Tel-el-Kebir. Over the

soft sands the host silently moved and, but for one unfortunate pistol-shot caused by the fumbling fingers of some nervous soldier, the surprise would have been complete. Otherwise, all was silence and secrecy.

But there are silent surprises which come not so much from lack of vigilance, as from sheer inability in a self-respecting nation to imagine the unthinkable. Deeming our foe an honourable one, who amongst Englishmen ever imagined such a crime on the part of Germany as the bombardment of open ports and innocent civilians, of Zeppelin raids on women and children and non-combatants ? It has given us a new view of the debasement of human nature, and such as only silent loathing can express. We discovered then that we and our allies were fighting not human beings but beasts, and every day reveals their capacity for more debased deeds still. Surely, never in the world's history has there been such a dismal descent into the depths of infamy.

Perhaps the perfection of silent surprise was reached in the old North-West American warfare, when the Indian pursued his foes with such silent steps that not a twig snapped as he moved stealthily along, and his foot-falls were silent even to his quick-eared foes.

Silent communications are a leading feature of modern warfare, and have reached a high pitch of perfection. What a power to our ships at sea to send their messages to and fro by wireless instruments ! For speed and certainty no communication could be better than these

silent messages. The Navy has much cause for thankfulness to Marconi.

Silently, too, run the telephone messages from trench to trench, and from base to front. Along a front of hundreds of miles the silent current runs, with its orders or counter-orders, its directions or rebukes. Such instruments quite annihilate distance.

Down from the aeroplane, almost invisible for its height, come silent messages, telling of a hidden battery, or directing artillery fire from its commanding elevation.

Sometimes, the silent message is to be found in the hands turned backwards or forwards of some church clock, or in the apparently innocent movements of some peasant ploughman. Unsuspected at first by the foe, they do their work.

Silence, too, is an endowment of the weapons of later days, awakening no suspicion until the moment of due contact.

A bomb falls like a bolt out of the blue, from air-ship or aeroplane, bringing death and destruction in its course.

The concealed mine, invisible from the surface, awaits its victims in deepest silence, and only speaks out its horrible note when touched into explosive life.

The submarine, a big black fish in the depths of the ocean, but able to sight a victim by its periscope, releases the silent torpedo which, by its shock, sinks a Lusitania, or sends a great armed cruiser to the bottom.

The wind being favourable to so dastardly a

deed, without noise the asphyxiating gas pours forth its deadly vapours, and, bearing down on the unsuspicious, leaves them gasping in the trenches.

Silence as a protection is worth emphasizing, for there are situations where the lack of it lays men open to the deadly missile. The whole art of modern warfare seems to consist in "lying low." The man who can be the most silent is often the safest.

In the Dolomite regions of the Tyrol, where the Italian Alpini have made so brave and glorious a fight for their beloved Italia Irredenta, the sharpshooters need specially to cultivate silence, for on the heights whispered words are dangerously echoed, and there are skilled shots waiting to fire at targets which only sounds reveal. Signs are the only language there, and he who can understand and use a deaf and dumb alphabet will have at his disposal a life-saving remedy. It is a choice there between either a deathlike silence, or death itself.

It is in silence that men creep in or out of the trenches, to relieve or be relieved. It is in silence that the Red Cross men do their blessed work. It is in silence that the supplies for men and guns are transported. Silence, dead silence, is the order of the day. It is in silence, too, that the reserves hold themselves in readiness to join their hard-pressed comrades at the front.

Silence is a protection even amongst civilians, for in the safeguarding of our country a glib tongue may be a grievous curse. For all you

know the inquisitive person at your elbow, so adroitly plying you with questions, may be an enemy spy. You may inadvertently tell him some valuable secret of which he knows the worth better than you. Be reticent with strangers is the golden rule. Emulate the reply of a coastguardsman to one who asked him some curious questions :—

"You'll excuse me, Sir, but I've got orders to shut up all I know in my stummick."

In the German railway carriages the following notice is displayed for the guidance of the soldiers :—

"A German soldier must not only be able to fight, but also to keep silence for his Fatherland."

Let us be as wise in our day and generation.

We do well, too, to be silent amidst reverses, seeing that every man is a trustee for his nation's brightness. It is a poor business that of the babbling pessimist, who goes about lowering the temperature of the nation, and sowing his dismal crop of tares. He is no patriot who looks at everything through jaundiced eyes, and speaks everything through doleful lips. If he has no bright message for his fellows let him put a padlock on his lips, and wait until his clouds roll by before picking the lock. Our true business is to hearten up our fellows, to show the silver lining to the clouds, and, to point up, best of all, to a God of Righteousness who is not likely to give the final victory to poisoners and pirates and baby-killers. We may as a nation have faults of

our own which require discipline, but not of such a deep dye as these.

We have been pointing out some of the silences of war, I should like now to dwell on some of the silences of the victims of war.

There is that greatest silence of all, the silence which marks the many spots where stand the rough crosses of honour, symbols of that supreme Cross of the world's greatest Hero. There lie, in their last earthly sleep, the patriots of their country, who sought to strike a blow for right, and, in striking it, died. Their comrades have done their best to adorn the graves, and the kindly peasants to keep them green and beauteous. All honour to the noble dead!

There are the silent villages and towns over whose streets the blows fell fast and thick. The walls have fallen, the churches show but a gaunt shell, the crucifixes lie prostrate amongst the ruins, and all is chaos. This, too, is the silence of death and ruin.

Picking their way amongst the *débris* are some old folks who in silent grief seek out their homestead, but who find it not amidst the desolation.

And here are the wounded heroes of the fight, maimed and broken, burned and gassed, and yet amidst their agonies maintaining a brave cheerfulness for the sake of their country and their manhood. With no spirit of boasting, they are full of admiration for the heroism of the other men. It may not be that a V.C. has come their way, or any other distinction, but

there is many a hero who has done, unnoticed, brave and gallant actions deserving of even these honours. Nobody was by, or nobody noticed it, or nobody was disengaged enough to chronicle the deed, and he will not tell himself, for he is content to have done his best, and that satisfies him.

Over the sea are the prisoners of war, who amidst their privations hold their heads high, and say nothing. And they are wise. We hear of the horrors of their lot amongst their inhuman foes, and how they simply wait, and suffer, and are silent. A suffering prisoner in his silence puts to shame the brutal guard.

We are not likely either to forget those silent ones who watch and wait at home, torn between the love of country and the love of their fighting kin. They gave them up at their country's call, and spoke never a word to keep them back. They feel proud of the gallant spirit which sent them forth, but they have their personal feelings, and they know that anything may happen. Yet, with the worst possibility before them, they nourish their souls with the consciousness that their country is worthy of even a life, and that dishonour is infinitely worse than death. And so they silently wait, and hope, and pray. There is not a little heroism behind the battle line among these silent watchers.

And not a few silently mourn their dead, and suppress the natural cry, for fear they may dishearten the living. They set their lips close, and keep a brave bearing in their heroism.

They feel, many of them, like that brave soul who said, "I would not exchange my dead son for all the living sons in the world," remembering how nobly he died.

And what can we do better, in conclusion, than point to that great circle of intercessors whose hearts are ever silently as well as vocally crying out to Him Who can save by many or by few? Waiting upon Him, they feel that they are doing glorious service to their brethren in the field, and, however tried, their faith rests firm on Him who lives to right the wrong and to do justice upon the earth. These, too, are God's warriors, and, fighting upon their knees, win down the blessed reinforcements which count for much in the day of battle. It is well to remember these pleading souls when we reckon up our strength, and, when the issues seem doubtful, we have but to throw these warm and living souls into the scales to redress the balance.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE HUMOURS OF SILENCE.

HUMOUR may be hard to define, but we all recognize it when we meet it, unless the sense of it has been withheld from us.

Blessed be humour indeed, for life would be but a poor thing without it. When it plays about us, sad life becomes tolerable, and harsh happenings become softened. It is a bit of light on a dark night. When the brow is creased with care, humour irons it smooth again. It does not, and cannot, take the place of those deeper consolations which are Heaven-born, but, as an adjunct, it is admirable and effectual. Blessed be humour, I say again.

Everything has its humorous side, and if we care to seek it and welcome it, we shall surely find it. But perhaps it is preferable to keep our sense of humour in strict subjection, lest it trespass on soberer domains. It can spoil the solidities of life, as well as soften its asperities. But rightly and soberly used it is like salt; it preserves and keeps sweet.

This little introduction paves the way, I think, for the subject of this chapter, the humours of silence. It would be strange if silence were the one exception to the rule.

In Oliver Wendell Holmes' Autocrat of the Breakfast Table, he treats his readers to a preface, in which occurs a whimsical fable on this very subject.

He declares that "once upon a time a notion was started that if all the people of the world would shout at once it might be heard in the moon."

The world was taken into the confidence of the projectors, and all agreed that in ten years' time the great experiment should be made.

As time slipped by, public excitement was all agog on the subject. The last year was especially busy with speculations as to "the awful noise that was to be made on that great occasion."

All, it seems, were to utter the ejaculation "Boo!" It was not difficult to remember, and even the youngest could achieve that simple sound.

The hour and moment arrived and passed in the deepest silence. Indeed, nobody spoke except a deaf man on one of the Fiji Islands and a woman in Pekin. In fact, everybody was so keen on listening for the stupendous shout that they quite forgot to contribute their share towards it.

Holmes does not complete the possibilities of his fable, for it was inevitable, I think, that among the waiting crowds thus reduced to silence, the deepest ever known upon earth, the strange and surprising climax should have aroused a laugh quite as loud as the expected "Boo!" For in humour there is always an element of the unexpected, and it is the surprising turn of events, conjoined with their

ludicrous character, which loosens the laughter and shakes out the merriment.

There is a bit of humorous music which illustrates the unexpected. Some of us have been thus pulled up short by an unlooked-for and surprising stop. Swinging along to the music of the band, and perhaps thrilled by it, just as we were expecting the completion and rounding up of the phrase, every instrument ceased. And this bit of musical humour acted on everyone in exactly the same manner; all laughed. Even when repeated, and we knew what was coming, the laugh was repeated too, for the humour of the silence lasted on.

It must have been this silence of the unexpected, I think, which roused my own sense of humour in Holborn some years ago. Two men were riding jauntily along in a diminutive pony-trap when the pony stumbled. One of them was promptly dropped at full length upon the roadway. The other, after a quite perceptible interval, followed suit. There was, of course, nothing humorous in this. But when both picked themselves up, took their old places in the trap, and drove away in perfect silence, not only my own but others' risible faculties were touched, and a broad smile overspread everyone's face. It was not what anybody would have expected under the circumstances, and the dumb show, happily harmless, was funny to a degree.

There is distinct humour, too, in a silence which is out of place, especially when it is broken by some unlucky or inane remark. It is such a silence as happens sometimes at a dinner-party when, as if by one consent, every voice is hushed,

except perhaps one foolish person's, whose words sound out with preternatural shrillness amidst the quiet, to the embarrassment of the talker, and to the amusement of the rest.

It sometimes happens that general hilarity is awakened by the unconscious silence of one who, having perpetrated some solecism or Irish bull, looks around wonderingly to know what the laugh is about. This appeals to the humorous, who, having laughed before, now literally shout. And the greater his bewilderment, the more their humour is intensified. His silent wonder is too much for even the most sedate.

Then the silence of consternation has its own special humour which is worth chronicling. Thus was it with Theodore Hook's victim. A very self-conscious young man, dressed in the height of fashion, strutting down the middle of the street, as if to impress all beholders, was suddenly met by Hook, and addressed in admirably simulated tones of respect :—

"If you please, Sir, are you anybody particular ?"

The young man, shrivelling under the eyes of the onlookers, collapsing into such a startled surprise as was evident from afar, and moving swiftly away from his tormentor without a word, appealed irresistibly to those whose humour was not drowned by pity for his evident humiliation.

There is humour, too, in some forms of silent dissimulation, as when some unpopular people are led by a trick into action. That sample of the humour of the trenches when our own Tommies advertised to the Germans the advent

of President Poincaré the next day at twelve o'clock is an excellent illustration. Punctually to time, a tall hat bobbed along the trenches, suspended on a bayonet, and drew from the foe much wasted ammunition.

There is something humorous, too, in some of the world's silence devices, where, for instance, speech is unadvisable for some weighty reason of accent or imperfect articulation. It is more humorous still when the counselled silence is inadvertently broken and the device spoiled. Such was the case with one wealthy man whose lack of H's was a trial to his listeners, but who was anxious to take part in some private theatricals. It was important that his goodwill should be assured, and the management gave him quite a silent part. He was simply to appear with his fingers on his lips to personify silence. This was, of course, entirely safe. But he, as he thought, improved upon it, feeling anxious to do his best, and he appeared holding up his finger, and at the same time giving forth in a loud whisper the explanatory word "'ush!"

Very humorous also are some entertainers' dumb shows, in which, without a word, but always by silent gesture, they convey their significant meanings. The curious thing is that silence adds a humour to an action otherwise quite commonplace and ordinary. The humour is evidently in the man, in the jocose cleverness of the imitation, in the play of feature, and in the merry movement with which the action proceeds. He is evidently a man in whom the spirit of humour is not only naturally present

in abundance, but has been developed by art and use. And where the mind has been cultivated as well, you have the refined humorist from whom all rough coarseness has been eliminated.

Stories have come down to us of great men who have condescended to this same silent expression of their powers, making silent speeches by means of feature and appropriate gesture. And we are told that so explicit was the movement and look that their silent speeches were as clear as their spoken ones, and gave as real pleasure. One thing it certainly did, it gave the hearers a chance of exercising their own ingenuity in interpretation. Of course, there was a large dash of the humorous in the whole effort, and intentionally so.

At times, silent humour takes a rough form, not at all to be commended. There is indeed a world of difference between playful and fierce forms of humour. Horse-play is only humour to the lower types of humanity. The moment that humour passes from the playful to the perilous it deserves only condemnation. Thus the bucolic mind has long loved the white sheet and the phosphorescent face of a ghost gliding solemnly and silently across the path of some guileless and terrified traveller. It is not humorous to the spectator. To him it is deadly indeed, for there are few of such iron nerve as can keep quiet at the apparition of so ghostly a figure. We may hope that with the spread of education and humanity such stupid bits of silent humour may cease to be.

The silence of the Cinema may quite reasonably be included amongst our illustrations, for humour is much in evidence among moving

pictures, and they are altogether of the silent order. Perhaps much of their popularity may be due to their silence, leaving as they do so much to be understood by the spectator, thus making him a partner in the transaction.

There is a silence of humorous distress which appeals to the general mind, whose laughter is always ready when somebody else is the victim. All the humorous elements seem present in that old story of the Bishop who, being hailed by two precocious youngsters to ring the bell of some imposing house, did so in the kindness of his heart, and did it in his best episcopal manner. But he soon discovered that he had been made the tool of these designing boys, for, while he stood smiling down upon them awaiting their thanks, he found himself summoned to run as they promptly did. It was a runaway ring. What he really did, the chronicler does not say. How he really felt we need not to be told. But, having been landed in so disgraceful a position, we may be sure that he walked away in the severest silence. Such a compromised Bishop is bound to raise the laugh of all at the time, and probably afterwards of himself.

There is also the humour of silent reserve to be noted. In telling a story the silences of it count for almost as much as the words. In fact, the more you can curtail the better, so long as the central core remains. Many a good story has been washed away in words, and, being watered down so liberally, the subtle essence has been drowned. It is a good story no longer. While a shortened story is not a

silent one, it is next door to it, and deserves to rank amongst the humours of silence, seeing that it is the silenced part which embalms its life. Humour must not be too plain or broad if you wish to preserve its sly pungency.

But let us beware that we do not leave out the vital point, otherwise the humour of it is wasted. This has sometimes happened, and the result has been disastrous, nobody acclaiming the story except those dishonest listeners who are ready to play the *claque* to anything which will reward them sufficiently.

There is a form of embarrassing silence which is found on the borderland of both the tragical and the humorous, but which may with advantage find a place in this chapter. It is one of those silences which none laugh at, but, later on, will laugh about. This is the form it generally takes. Somebody in the midst of a story-telling circle strikes in with :—

"I know a first-rate story about that; a killing story."

With such a preface everybody sits up, the expectant look on every eye, and the story begins.

But at the critical point the too much assumed memory fails, and there is a pause, while over the face of the entertainer sweeps a look of apprehension. He starts back, and repeats what he has already told, hoping that the threads will readjust themselves. But, no, his good story hangs in mid-air and the silence deepens. Then he gives it up with the best grace that he can summon :—

"It's gone from me, quite. I'm awfully sorry, but it is really the best story I ever heard."

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